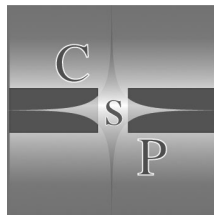


Heidegger and the Aesthetics of Living

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Edited by

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Cambridge Scholars Publishing

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This book first published 2008 by

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

15 Angerton Gardens, Newcastle, NE5 2JA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-84718-506-1, ISBN (13): 9781847185068

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	vii
Vrasidas Karalis	
1. Heidegger and the Philosophy of Emancipation.....	1
Gianni Vattimo	
2. Cutting Poets to Size – Heidegger, Hölderlin, Rilke	8
Anthony Stephens	
3. Geography, Biology and Politics: Heidegger on Place and World.....	25
Jeff Malpas	
4. Heeding Heidegger’s Way: Questions of the Work of Art.....	45
Elizabeth M. Grierson	
5. The Pitch Black Night of Human Creation: Calling Heidegger’s Philosophy of Terror to Account	65
Peter Murphy	
6. Martin Heidegger and the Philosophy of Negativity	79
Paolo Bartoloni	
7. The Interpretation of <i>Da-sein</i> as a Transformative, Poetic and Ethical Being	95
Jane Mummery	
8. Moods That Matter: Heidegger, Affect and Wallace Stevens’ “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird”	112
Peter Williams	
9. Terrence Malick’s <i>The Thin Red Line</i> and the Question of Heideggerian Cinema.....	126
Robert Sinnerbrink	

10. Reflections on Heidegger's Saying: "The way what is questioned essentially engages our questioning belongs to the innermost meaning of the question of being"	142
George Vassilacopoulos	
11. Art, Truth and Freedom: Contemplating Heidegger's Categorical Vision.....	157
Colin Hearfield	
12. The Work and the Promise of Technology	165
John Dalton	
13. The <i>An-Denken</i> of Existentialism: Vattimo's Heidegger and the Aesthetics of Living	189
Ashley Woodward	
14. Martin Heidegger and the <i>Aletheia</i> of his Greeks.....	208
Vrasidas Karalis	
Contributors.....	228
Index of Names.....	232

INTRODUCTION

VRASIDAS KARALIS

In December 2005 the Sydney Society for Literature and Aesthetics organised the first ever international conference in Australia on Martin Heidegger. The present volume contains a selection of the papers given in revised form. They address a wide range of issues without aiming to be exhaustive. What connects them is the unifying theme of the consequences of Heidegger's mode of philosophizing for the way we understand philosophy today.

Most of the contributions avoid the well-known controversies on his political involvement with Nazism, and offer a critical but 'post-politicized' interpretation of his work. Indeed, the issue with Heidegger today is not primarily to discuss his personal involvement with the political ideologies of his era. In general, the papers address the issue of what is "livable" within Heidegger's work and what constitutes the aesthetics that emanate from his work as a new breathing space for philosophical inquiry. One might claim that, after his connection with one of the most brutal regimes in the history of humanity, what is "livable" in his work is of extreme importance for the understanding of his past impact and his continuing influence. Indeed the main problem his philosophy has at the beginning of the 21st century is that it suffers from an excess of uncritical exegesis, especially in the English-speaking world. Because of approaches which verge on the hagiographical it might be said that Heidegger is everywhere except in his own philosophy, since his own way of philosophizing has been idolised and fetishised, losing its radical character in the process.

The scope of this volume is thus to present a general overview of the consequences of Heidegger's philosophy for various disciplines, notably cultural studies, literary interpretation, aesthetic discourse, ethics, theatrical performance, film studies, philosophy and, more precisely, the history of philosophy. The need for such a detached and dispassionate assessment of his work is evident today after the intense debates of the 80s and 90s about his political involvement, which tended to obscure the intricacies of his work and to create instead the mutually contradictory

myths of an 'evil philosopher' – or else of a cult-figure in the mould of the Gnostic Demiurge or even a philosophical super star.

The collection represents a moderate and cautious de-mythologisation of Heidegger's hermeneutics – not based on the notoriety of the man but on the complex nature of his work. Its main purpose is to elucidate its complexities and insights and present their significance for thinking today in various fields and disciplines. Certainly, it is a conscious departure from the aim of such volumes as *The Heidegger Case* (eds. Tom Rockmore and Joseph Margolis), *Heidegger toward the Turn* (ed. James Risser), *Heidegger and the Greeks* (D.A. Hyland & J.P. Manoussakis) and *A Companion to Heidegger* (H. L. Dreyfus & M. A. Wrathall) that aspire to addressing aspects of his philosophy in an exhaustive and systematic way.

In our perception individual contributions should engage in a creative dialogue with specific texts, aspects and problems discussed or delineated in Heidegger's own work with the conscious intention of avoiding the trend to enforce harmonies on it, but rather of detecting the creative ruptures his philosophy contains.

With this in mind, the essays in the volume are extremely diverse in their approach, addressing Heidegger's work from various disciplinary standpoints. Some of the articles are written by scholars who have published extensively on 20th century philosophy in other languages (German, Greek, and Italian) and analyse the relation of Heidegger's philosophy to these specific traditions without the mediation of translations – although the authors have provided them for this volume. Their freedom from dependence on the standard English versions helps shed new light on Heidegger's own interpretation of various texts and directs the reader towards a fresh approach to his sources.

As mentioned above, the book is focused on a conscious effort to depoliticize Heidegger's hermeneutics and promote a nuanced appreciation of the structure of his philosophy. The structure of his thinking is so multi-layered that contradictory readings may lay claim to equal validity. Yet one must try to identify the *dominant structures* and *trans-textual configurations* that give his thinking cohesion and continuity. The early Christian Heidegger appears in direct conflict with the idea of 'Dasein's thrownness' for example, although one might claim that Heidegger's thinking is in many ways a translation of Christian concepts into the realm of secular apocalypics. Yet the translation itself changes the meaning of what is translated: the semantic fields that surround specific terms develop unexpected connections with apparently unrelated ones, so that in the new text that results, the same terms indicate completely incongruous realities. The same can be claimed about his ideas of 'inauthenticity', 'fallenness',

‘anxiety’, ‘dying’, ‘death’ and ‘nothingness’ which, despite their religious origins, acquire new meanings and implications within his philosophical discourse.

This may be identified as the creative element in Heidegger’s thinking. That he proceeded with a *trans-signification* of language was made necessary by historical circumstances, a process that must be seen as both innovative and inevitable. Such a trans-signification had already taken place in the theological discourse of Karl Barth’s *Epistle to the Romans* (2nd edition 1922), while in Anglo-American philosophy A.N. Whitehead’s *Process and Reality* (1929) had established the need for a new form in philosophical thinking. Heidegger’s *Being and Time* (1927) seems to complete the triptych of works that changed the idioms and scopes of philosophising during that crucial decade.

This book tries to restore the balance between Heidegger’s philosophy and the elements of National Socialism he temporarily annexed for purposes of his own that were not part and parcel of his short-lived and abortive political affiliation. Hence it addresses ‘intrinsic’ problems of his philosophy, such as the essence of the work of art (Elizabeth M. Grierson), ethics (Jane Mummery), his dialogue with great poets (Anthony Stephens, Peter Williams, Colin Hearfield), the problem of temporality (Peter Murphy), spatiality (Jeff Malpas), the question of historicity (Ashley Woodward), technology (John Dalton) and culture (George Vassilacopoulos) as well as his relation with contemporary visual artists (Robert Sinnerbrink), philosophers (Paolo Bartoloni), as well as the question of *aletheia* (Vrasidas Karalis). The book challenges Heideggerian studies, as they have developed in English-speaking countries in the last thirty years, by re-grounding his work in the contextual realities of his era and by applying to it new frames of reference. Furthermore, in an era of post-modern semantic nihilism, which was to a certain extent Heidegger’s own creation, it proposes a *humanistic* re-reading of his philosophy.

The main argument implicit in most contributions pursues the line that, despite his renunciation of European humanism, Heidegger was himself, in reality, one of its most important proponents in the 20th century, with all the contradictions and the antinomies that follow from this and which are essential to this philosophical tradition. We cannot see humanism as simply identified with technologisation, Cartesian rationalism, modern positivism or analytic philosophy. Humanism is a more fundamental ground of thinking and being; humanism is not about the autonomy of reason and the dominance of logic but about the reasons of and for human autonomy. Humanism is about the lived experience of the human as it wrestles to reconcile itself to its own autonomy. Heidegger’s philosophical

development has to be seen as addressing this extremely important question and the forms of thinking that proceed from it, even if his ontological foundationalism seems to negate any such autonomy and any justification for it.

The presence of Heidegger's philosophy, and indeed the mythifying of his personality, have already become part of the canon of intellectual life in the 20th century. Despite his philosophical idiom, or perhaps because of it, Heidegger seems first of all to have played a therapeutic role within the context of that Anglo-American philosophy, which was strongly dominated by the traditions of analytic and empiricist thinking. Within the context of Continental philosophy also, it seems that his work and personality were of critical importance for the establishment of new movements, for the re-interpretation of western thinking from the pre-Socratics to his day. His creative interaction, albeit in negative terms with such major thinkers as Karl Popper or Gianni Vattimo, is discussed in two contributions in this volume.

Heidegger's personal quest can be clearly seen in his philosophical 'turns' and 'counter-turns' until the end of his life, as we may observe in his biography by Rudiger Safransky. What one cannot see there is the presence of certain changes of mind during the fateful decade of the 30s in his life. 'Turn' does not seem to mean 'metanoia' in his thinking, a specific Greek and Christian notion totally absent from his mental universe.

By totally rejecting his contribution, as George Steiner has done, is like trying to forget his historical influence, which has been obvious and indisputable, even if one wants to avoid it. Philosophically, Heidegger is an antidote to the scholasticism and the hair-splitting frenzy of the analytic tradition. After its introduction into Anglo-American academia, his work has inspired new problematics, new forms of articulating experience, and new pathways of interpreting the immediacy of being in history. His philosophical presence has indeed been of historic consequence and has re-shaped the ways philosophers address issues anew against the background of a moribund and sterile analytic tradition. Yet, by being so influential, his work has obscured the whole philosophical tradition that Heidegger was interpreting and continuing. The truth is that his overall philosophy from his early period to the last is a mixture of genuine problems and far-reaching insights with suggestions of a symptomatic and circumstantial nature, dependent on the historical context around them and on the ways that Heidegger himself was able or unable to communicate with it.

Amongst others, two issues stand out as extremely contentious and have to be discussed elsewhere in detail: first, his concept of the concealment of being after Plato, and second his post-war anti-humanism. Despite its Promethean aura, the first is ultimately a somewhat schematic interpretation of western European philosophy which ignores or deliberately quashes the contribution of great thinkers after the classical period of Athens. It is erroneous to suggest that the Stoics, the Epicureans, the Skeptics, Plotinus, the Christian fathers of the fourth century, the Christian philosophers of the pre-modern period, the Hebrew prophets, the Jewish thinkers of the Diaspora, or the Arab Aristotelians had concealed the history of being as presencing and originary experience. It is rather simplistic to suggest that Plotinus, Thomas Aquinas and Immanuel Kant could not see being in its pure emergence and presence. The idea that being exists beyond its manifestations is pre-eminently anti-Heideggerian, as we find his thinking in *Being and Time*. The impurities of being, its very facticity, its 'readiness-to-hand' create the possibility of the conceptual and experiential recuperation of the originary experience of being. By discarding them as inauthentic or even nihilistic, the unity of their being as real presence is rendered impossible. It is the specificity of real beings, the actualisation of their nature, the antinomic consequences of their relations that make Being the ultimate essence of their reality. Such disregard for history is indeed anti-philosophical and transforms philosophy into geometric shapes that substitute abstractions for beings.

One might indeed claim that, despite his professed love for the pre-Socratics, especially Parmenides, Heraclitus and Anaximander, Heidegger is closer to the Pythagorean vision of elemental harmonies and the 'acoustic' nature of beings. The pre-Socratics thrived on the material gravity of beings; even Parmenides' Being is dense, thick and substantial, in a way that has some affinity to the mythical version of Einstein's finite/infinite, curved and yet massive space. What was inexplicable to them was not the way beings are, but how they change (how they were and were-not at the same time) and what remains in them from their interaction with others. Hence the interesting thing about the first Greek philosophers is how they succeeded in escaping from the ritualised and hierophantic natural theology of oriental civilizations and addressed issues of change, identity and transformation in terms of their cognition and knowability. The correlation between what has changed and the mind that understood it was probably the most dynamic element introduced by them into the process which created and established European philosophy.

It is simplistic to suggest that humanism may be equated with technology which, according to Heidegger, is negative and disastrous, as if

technology as such were not the creative externalization of human capacity to create material forms. For example, art and language are also forms of mental technology, and the machine itself stands for an expansion of physical capacities. Fire, writing and clothing are similar forms of mental technologies which, according to Heidegger's own belief, 'gather' together people and offer 'home' and 'housing' to their being.

Some of Heidegger's own ideas simply do not attain the level of his overall philosophical orientation and remain lost in a no man's land of half-truths. Indeed, Heidegger has to be seen within the context of his own Germanic tradition and most of his work to placed within the framework of a conscious attempt to criticize and refute what might be called "*the metaphysics of anti-presence*" that was dominant in Germany during the Weimar Republic and earlier. Against the search for invisible entities, structures, drives and atoms, hidden within things, the mind and experience or within human semantic networks of communication, Heidegger tried to bring to the fore the actuality of the mind, the thing as *is-ness*, experience and meaning as they appear without frameworks of appropriation or enclosed by utilitarian ethics. He abolished the Platonic and Neoplatonic distinction between inner and outer and, by abolishing it, he succeeded in introducing new forms of articulating the content of experience and expanded the representational potential of their existence.

His concept of 'Dasein', being-ness in his later writings, which may well stand for the totalising gaze connecting the complexity and multiplicity of beings within the conditions of their mortality and humanity, also has ambiguous consequences. Multiplicity has always been a tantalising problem for German thought after Hegel. Heidegger seems to have tried to overcome the confusion caused by the 'un-intelligibility' of beings in their plural manifestations together with the intentionality in the universe of human artifacts. His critique of modernity shows a strange reluctance to come to terms with the non-ordinary, the un-predicted and the novel. Thus the philosopher who purported to dissect ordinary, everyday existence, was completely immersed in the fear of its opposite. In that respect, his technophobia might be seen as a sentimental reaction to the background of Nazism and post-war German reconstruction, eras dominated by mechanized forms of social engineering. Also, Heidegger the thinker had technologised himself at the moment he published his books and irrevocably so when he put on the Nazi uniform, or indeed the gown of the university professor. The technological is another being-with, especially in complex and stratified societies. The very complexity of societal forms invents new hearths for *Mitsein*, new points of convergence

and intersubjectivity. The eyes meet on the television set and the new divinities of history emerge from their osmosis.

Hence, his critique of the modern always misses the point of what precisely makes modernity another *form* of being-ness and not a condition of being that has meaning solely by contrast to older, mainly Greek, conceptions, practices and experiences. In a sense, Cornelius Castoriadis' suggestion that the task of philosophy is to enhance human autonomy against the pervasive heteronomy imposed by societal structures and human creativity is itself a Heideggerian idea never envisaged by Heidegger. Yet in order to understand the implications of such a suggestion one must consider the importance of the human subject itself as existing, and hence must have reflected on the anthropic as a principle of being-ness. There are thus many philosophical 'elements' missing from Heidegger's thought. His early rejection of psychology shows a profound misprision of the nature of language as collective creation and its function within semantic fields of cultural and trans-cultural validity. Indeed, one could argue that despite its international eminence, Heidegger's philosophy is equally important for what it omits, passes over in silence and conceals and that, in a sense, his own critique of modernity, rationality and humanism is also a critique of his own philosophical enterprise. The most important task of a new approach to his works is to see what is not and cannot be reduced to the individual and what can become a cultural hypothesis of wider validity. Heidegger's work already suffers from an ever-growing industry of commentaries which, instead of elucidating the presuppositions and the consequences of his work, concoct an obscure mythology around his name and about his philosophy. The only fair way to assess his work is to see it within its limitations and explain what transcends them and what can be conducive to different forms of thinking by expanding the limitations of their semantic structures.

As with every philosopher we must try to focus on the consequences of their questions and not the accuracy of their answers. Furthermore we must try to understand the interplay of meanings that made such questions possible and thereby to locate their explanatory value, indeed – one might say: their *anthropic* value. For, even within his critique of humanism, Heidegger's thinking can be extremely humanistic in its implications and highly provocative in regard to its anthropological underpinnings. Indeed, one could claim that anthropological reflection was impossible within his thinking because he never addressed the question of the *tragic* as a dimension of self-understanding and self-articulation. Historically it is interesting that even the collapse of Germany, or the Holocaust, or the destruction of Europe were never understood by Heidegger as tragic

events or inauthentications of being. The mythologisation of war, as found in his admiration for Ernst Jünger, did not lead to the investigation of the ethical significance of war, or the moral meaning latent in acts of war. The most momentous event in his life time seems to have had no impact on his own thinking, except by leading him to withdraw into a pre-historic view of the forces that instigate destructive drives within history. One could claim that the fourfold constellation of earth, sky, mortals and divinities that appears in the end of his philosophical project is a very anthropomorphic escape from the impasse that he himself had created by the absence of tragedy from his philosophy of thinking and dwelling. Humans and especially poets abide by the tragic predicament of being: tragedy is the most immediate way through which humans experience their existence and give meaning to their presence out there. The overcoming of tragedy is by all means the task of the philosopher, as it was so well understood by all thinkers from Socrates onwards.

It is therefore anomalous that Heidegger never indicated that there can be no 'historicity', 'temporality' and 'being' without tragedy in their self-articulation. His primordial experience of 'Seyn' sounds more like the experience of nature by animals before the emergence of humans than as lived by humans who give speech to Being. We cannot see the real without its history in exactly the same way that we cannot use language without remembering its past. 'Dasein' throws its 'pale cast of thought' on itself and hence can perceive its being-ness: through such punctures humans make Being authentic. Heidegger's critique of humanism, or indeed of metaphysics, tends to underestimate the fact that humans act, or exist, not simply in order to know but in order to be known as well, and in order to create meaningful forms of communication and forms of self-understanding. His rejection of western metaphysics throws into oblivion the very fact that there can be nothing more metaphysical than a critique of metaphysics. Even the idea that we can have ontology without the human in its plurality is tantamount to spiritual solipsism, substituting for the creative principle of godhead the pure and authentic vision of *the* philosopher, while expressing at the same time the detachment of the divine gaze before the emergence of life. Indeed one could claim that Heidegger's 'Being' reflects the untroubled stillness and unity of life before the appearance of humans and the choices they had to make. It is the 'pale cast of thought' that makes us 'custodians' of 'Being' and not simply 'users' of things. Through thinking we dwell in history. The opposite is not a mystical vision of the real, as has been claimed by certain serious students of his work; it is rather the abolition of the human as presence and self-reflexivity.

Thus one could claim that the lack of an elaborated anthropological vision made Heidegger's philosophy after the 'turning' philosophically anti-Hellenic. The quest for ethics and moral distinctions that have bedeviled the students of his work must be incorporated within a quest for a complete anthropology delineated by his works, an anthropology that would look at Being in its anthropic re-creation of the silence of nature and the absence of god. Only then will the ethical consequences of the "livable" part of his philosophy become apparent and Heidegger's philosophy regain the moral authority to reveal the essence of being. Heidegger's philosophy is arguably the most daring hypothesis about the human condition in recent centuries; yet his answers somehow do not do justice to the questions he poses and show the unredeemed debt that he himself owed to his society, class and personality. Yet the hypothesis remains valid and still spurs thinking on; indeed it makes philosophical thinking immerse itself into the 'thick questions' of the mind and helps reformulate important aspects of the European tradition. Indeed, Heidegger's thought has stimulated great Japanese thinkers like Keiji Nishitani, Nishida Kitaro and Masao Abe and has contributed to the re-interpretation of Dogen and to a degree of Nagarjuna himself. Thus it builds bridges for inter-cultural communication that express a new understanding of the *anthropic* in history. The cross-pollination of his philosophy leads to a new anthropological vision of being in history and time above and beyond the cultural limits of the philosopher's origins. For to philosophise does not simply mean to ask "why there are beings rather than nothing?" but "why beings that are experience nothing?". Then Being ceases to be mute and becomes the true being of the human presence.

These essays address Heidegger's contested contributions to a wide range of issues and especially the question of his legacy, enquiring how such an important philosophical statement may transcend its own limitations and refract many problems of thought in unexpected directions.

HEIDEGGER AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF EMANCIPATION¹

GIANNI VATTIMO

It is probably useful, when we talk about the role of philosophy in late-modern and post-modern societies, to underline the analogies that exist between writing such as *The Open Society and its Enemies* by Karl Popper and the ideas that Heidegger discussed in many of his works, especially in a lecture concerning *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thought* (1964). This is obviously a paradoxical approach, especially because Heidegger does not exactly seem a “democratic” thinker. But the reasons that push Popper to line up against Plato are basically the same that move Heidegger in his polemic against metaphysics, and, as he writes – significantly – in the opening statement of that lecture, it is always Platonism, extending from ancient times up to Kant, Hegel and Nietzsche, that is opposed. In fact, if, instead of Popper’s expression “open society”, we write the Heideggerian term *Ereignis*, “event”, we do not betray either the intentions of Popper or those of Heidegger, even if both would not have been happy about this small hermeneutical “act of violence”. Popper maintains that Plato was a dangerous enemy of the open society because he had an essentialist concept of the world: all that is real corresponds to a law that is given as a structure of being, and society too must simply conform to this essential order.

As the philosopher is the one who knows the essential order of things, it is to him that the duty of having command over society will be given. The function that philosophers – and today scientists, technicians, experts – have claimed for themselves during the centuries, that of the preeminent advisors of princes, is closely linked to this basic conviction: that individuals and societies should always correspond to an order objectively given, and therefore valid as the sole possible moral code. A modern principle such as that one that says “*auctoritas, non veritas, facit legem*” –

¹ An earlier version of this article appeared in the journal *Micromega* under the title “Heidegger filosofo della democrazia”, vol. 5, 2003.

not truth but authority makes the law – has always been subject to rationalist criticism inspired by metaphysics, even when this was motivated by the best revolutionary intentions.

Everywhere we are faced with “truth” in politics, the danger of authoritarianism begins, precisely that “closure” that Popper stigmatizes in his work. Now, what Heidegger calls “metaphysics” is exactly the idea that being is an order - objectively given once and for all. This is also the substance of Nietzsche’s criticism of Socrates, when he sees in him the inceptor of modern decadence, guilty of having killed the great tragic spirit of the ancients. If being is a stable structure given once and for all, there is no possible openness in history nor any freedom.

Obviously, such a vision is much more reassuring than the tragic one which – so we assume – characterized the pre-Classical Greeks; but any such reassurance, we suggest, is particularly meaningful for those who are already secure in the prevailing order, and who, for this reason above all, recognise it as rational and worthy of remaining valid forever. (Here, I call your attention not only to Nietzsche but also to Benjamin’s theses on the philosophy of history.) I remind you that, in the first pages of the lecture on the end of philosophy I mentioned previously, Heidegger cites, in immediate proximity to the name of Plato, that of Karl Marx, as one who has – well before Nietzsche – already overturned metaphysics and thus also Platonism.

By pointing this out, I do not want to say that it is possible to bridge the gap between the Marxist overturning and that “overcoming” (*Überwindung*), for which Heidegger tries to prepare the way by his work. But it is not entirely arbitrary, in our view, to recall Marxist ideas on the origin of alienation in the social division of work when we try to understand – with Heidegger – why and how metaphysics has established itself in such a radical way in the history of our world. Here I leave aside the debate on the “historical” or “eternal” nature of metaphysics in the thought of Heidegger, which would probably lead us to invoke his dependence on the biblical myth of Original Sin, a myth he could never completely get rid of.

Although the notion of metaphysics is meant by Heidegger in a rather peculiar way, I think that the analogy with Popper – even if it is paradoxical – could clarify the sense in which it is also shared by much contemporary philosophy; obviously, it should not be difficult to recognize it in Wittgenstein (*“Die Welt ist alles was der Fall ist.”* “The world is everything that is the case”: Tractacus, 1), and, of course, in the context of pragmatism and neopragmatism. I know some philosophers are still talking about metaphysics in a way that is concordant

– as far as terminology is concerned – with both the continuance of classical thought and of the Neoscholastic tradition. Furthermore, it pervades that peculiar Neoscholastic school that is analytical philosophy – in which metaphysics is identified with a set of rigid “regional ontologies”, i.e. the formal structures, or conditions, of knowledge, deprived of that elasticity and historicity still recognizable in the transcendental concepts of Kant and also of Husserl. But it is quite clear that, at least in a great deal of contemporary philosophy, metaphysics in its Heideggerian sense, as the identification of true being with a stable structure, objectively recognizable and the source of rules, is largely rejected, even without any explicit reference to Heidegger himself.

It is exactly on the basis of the rejection of metaphysics understood in that way – a rejection that may be motivated either with Nietzschean or with Heideggerian reasons, or with Wittgensteinian ones, or with the arguments of Carnap or Popper – that I propose to start talking about the problem of the end of philosophy in the era of democracy. Or, to phrase it more clearly: going beyond both Heidegger and Popper, we could simply identify the end of metaphysics with the affirmation, practical and political, of democratic regimes.

Wherever we find democracy, it is not possible to find a class of holders of the real “truth” who either exert directly the power of Plato’s philosopher-kings or give the sovereign the rules for his behaviour. That is why – I repeat – I think that it is appropriate to recall Marx when we read the pages I quoted before from Heidegger’s lecture. In those pages, the discourse concerns the end of philosophy as a consequence of the dissolution it undergoes in the specializing of particular sciences, from psychology to sociology, anthropology, logic, logistics and semantics, right up, to cybernetics (today’s computer science). It’s easy to understand that this is in no sense an abstract theme: those among us who teach philosophy in schools and universities can experience this progressive dissolution of philosophy every day.

In the universities, where new courses of psychology, anthropology and computer science are set up, the enrolment in philosophy courses decreases rapidly. Funds at the disposal of philosophical studies are reduced as well. Ultimately, all this is very reasonable, but unpleasant for many of us and especially for our students. Anyway, the phenomenon appears to be one aspect of the end of philosophy that has nothing to do with democracy, being a simple concomitant of the increased autonomy of the human sciences. But, as Heidegger also says, it corresponds to a growing social power and prestige of specialists, which means a much

greater “scientific” – and less democratic – control on the various aspects of communal life.

In view of all this, it is understandable that the end of philosophy leaves an open gap that democratic societies must take into consideration. On the one hand, philosophy, intended as the sovereign function of the wise ones in the government of the *polis*, is dead. On the other hand – as is suggested by the title of Heidegger’s lecture, which speaks of a “task of thought” after the end of philosophy – the problem, a specifically democratic problem, remains: that the authority of the philosopher-king should by no means be usurped by the uncontrolled power of the many technicians in the different sectors of social life. This latter is a much more dangerous power, because it is more deceitful and fragmented – so much so, that the revolutionary purpose of “striking the heart of the state” becomes totally unrealistic, as the power is distributed into so many centres. If we wanted to use a psychiatric metaphor, we might say that, with philosophy reaching its end in the specialized sciences, our world runs the risk of becoming a schizophrenic society, where sooner or later a new supreme power will arise. It will be a requisite of making collective life possible at all, even at the cost of freedom.

We should then change the title of Heidegger’s lecture into: *The End of Philosophy in Democratic Societies and the (Political) Task of Thought*. The sovereign role of the philosopher is finished, because sovereigns are finished. It is not easy to say if these “ends” are linked by a cause–effect relation. Like Marx, Heidegger would say that the end of metaphysics and, consequently, the end of the claims of philosophy to sovereignty, did not happen just because of the philosophers. In his view, all this is an event of being to which the philosopher has to “correspond”. But here his difference from Marx looks rather slight: where does that being speak to which the philosopher must answer? Not in the economic-materialistic “structure” of society, as Marx would say; or – in any event – not just there. But Heidegger’s call to not be satisfied with the “daily presentation of what is present as *Vorhandenes*” (*die vorhandene Gegenwärtigung des Anwesenden*; in *Zur Sache des Denkens*, Niemeyer, 1969: 79; also 179) recalls in a significant way the Marxian critique of ideology, that “school of suspicion” which is expressed, for example, in Brecht’s slogan – “what always happens, do not find it normal”.

Moreover, the possibility I am developing here, namely to propose interpretations which see an analogy between Heidegger’s rejection of metaphysics and Popper’s defence of the open society, and which until twenty years ago would have appeared absolutely scandalous – even this possibility does not represent a “theoretical” discovery. To the extent it is

arguable, it simply accords with the new conditions of our time. Compared with the epoch in which Heidegger and Popper wrote their works, the world of today is much more strongly “rationalized” and “scientifically organized”. The phenomenon of the end of philosophy and the schizophrenia of the specialized sciences and technologies, with the possible consequence of a new authoritarianism – I am thinking of Bush’s America, of course, but not exclusively – is infinitely more visible and pervasive.

When I propose the thesis of the relatively paradoxical nearness of Heidegger to Popper, I am not claiming that this is the definitive truth, I am just trying to offer an interpretation that corresponds with present events, to the concrete situation in which I think we live.

Following Heidegger and Marx, maybe not Popper as well (although I could argue this case for him also), the task of thought in this situation is to think what remains hidden in the “everyday presentation” of what usually happens. For Marx what matters is the dialectic concreteness of the interrelations which are concealed by the false consciousness of ideology; for Heidegger, the truth as *alétheia*, the basic openness of a horizon – (we might speak of a paradigm) – which makes possible all truth meant as correspondence to the state of affairs, be it a verification or a falsification of propositions. As I said, it is not immediately clear that this effort to think what remains hidden in the everyday presentation of the world also corresponds to Popper’s idea of the task of philosophy; I don’t want to pursue this problem further here.

As far as Heidegger and Marx are concerned, the question is: may we talk of the hidden *alétheia* which Heidegger has in mind as if it were identifiable with the concreteness of the economic and social interrelations of Marx’s materialism? In other words: how shall we imagine the task of thought in the epoch in which philosophers no longer (believe that they) have a privileged access to an eternal truth, on the basis of which they would be entitled to govern society or to be the advisors of the sovereign? If we followed Marx exclusively, we would return to a metaphysical and rationalistic historicism, in which the task of the philosophers would be to express the definitive truth of history – something known clearly only by the proletariat, which also makes it real in the form of revolution. If, on the contrary, we had to follow exclusively Heidegger, we would find ourselves entangled in that “groundless mysticism, bad mythology, dangerous irrationalism” (*grundlose Mystik, schlechte Mythologie, verderblicher Irrationalismus: Zur Sache des Denkens*, *ibid.*) which he sees as a risk related to his theory.

In order to avoid these risks, which are not only Heidegger's, but those of several contemporary philosophies as well – certainly of those which are unwilling to become merely harmless complements of the specialized human sciences – one has to step forward on the path of the “urbanization of the Heideggerian province” (I call your attention here to Habermas' famous definition of Gadamer's hermeneutics). This means, for me, to go back to a undeveloped passage of Heidegger's lecture on “The Origin of the Work of Art” (1936).

On a page of that essay, Heidegger – as you know – defined the work of art as the “putting into work of the truth”, in other words as the place in which the event of being happens, opening up an epoch, etc. From that moment on, Heidegger developed his “ontology” mainly, if not exclusively, on the basis of this idea of the event: he tried again and again to catch the event of being by listening to the inaugural words of poetry, of the ancient wisdom (for example: *Der Spruch des Anaximander*), etc. But in the essay of 1936 he also named, without further explanations, other ways of the opening of truth, i.e. of the event of being. Among them, also “the foundation of a state”, or politics. It is very likely that an additional reason he did not develop his meditation on this point was his unhappy adventure with Nazism. For me, it is nevertheless important to recall this allusion to politics as a possible place for the event of being, because what I want to suggest is that, in the epoch of democracy, the inaugural event of being might no longer be the work of art, but, in some sense, the political *agorà*.

It was in the epoch of metaphysics that the event of being happened in those privileged moments which were the great works of art; not forgetting that the great works of art have always had something to do with the power of the sovereigns (painting, architecture, theatre, music; even poetry, in many senses). In those privileged expressions, being speaks still in the form of an “essential” truth which still entitles, or claims to entitle, the philosopher to sovereignty.

My provisional conclusion would then be that, if we want to “correspond” to the event of being in our specific historical situation, we should try to discern its voice in something which has much more to do with politics than with art, or with any kind of profound invisible announcement. I have ventured the proposal that we describe this kind of thought with a term of the late Foucault, “*ontologie de l'actualité*”, ontology of the immediate present, as it were. The event of being to which thought is challenged to correspond in the epoch of democracy is the way in which being gives itself, from time to time, in collective experience. What is hidden and tends to remain un-thought in the specialization of the

sciences is the “*on he on*”, being as being, the wholeness of the individual and social experience. This wholeness is to be liberated from technological schizophrenia and not to be allowed to relapse into authoritarian social discipline. If one still speaks here of ontology, entrusting once more the task to the philosophers – no longer as sovereigns or as advisors of the sovereign – it means that one has to imagine a new and still undefined social role of the “intellectual”, closer to that of the artist and of the priest than to those of the scientist and of the technologist. At any rate, it should be a priest without a hierarchical church, or else a street artist. In a less picturesque way, we might describe this role as that of a historian and a politician – somebody who does ontology insofar as he helps in connecting current experience with those of the past and with those of other cultures and societies, building and rebuilding a continuity which is the very meaning of the term *logos*, discourse. (I think again of the idea of the philosopher as a *Dolmetscher*, a “translator”, proposed by Habermas). Does all this have anything to do with “being”, one might ask. But: is being anything different, more profound and hidden, than this, its “event”?

CUTTING POETS TO SIZE – HEIDEGGER, HÖLDERLIN, RILKE

ANTHONY STEPHENS

From the outset I must make it clear that I am writing here not as a philosopher, but as a scholar of German literature. This implies that all the texts I treat will be seen as having literary status, regardless of any other claims implicit *in* them or claims made *for* them. This impinges on Heidegger's tendency to accord a special privilege to certain poetic texts, especially the late poems of Hölderlin. Few scholars writing in English on Heidegger show any awareness that Hölderlin's late poetry did not become accessible to the general reader until the publication of the fourth volume of Norbert von Hellingrath's edition in 1916 and that Heidegger was making a radical departure from the customary reading of Hölderlin's late work by taking a hagiographical approach to precisely this phase of his creativity. He has given this a theoretical basis in numerous places, notably in the essay *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerks* (*The Origin of the Work of Art*) of 1935-1936. From a literary perspective, however, this often results in his lifting segments of text from their origins, in effect: decontextualising them. A great deal of writing on Heidegger in English simply accepts this practice without enquiring into what implications this change of status may have. It has resulted in the reception of Hölderlin by Heidegger and Heideggerians constituting a separate preserve, isolated from the mainstream of scholarship on the poet both in Germany and elsewhere. My intention in the following is to restore something of the literary perspective. For the sake of consistency and accuracy, all translations into English in this essay are my own. References to Heidegger and other authors are to texts in the original language.

Taking this approach means suspending the special privilege Heidegger accords to certain poems. Hence all such texts as may be seen as having a claim to other than fictional status, including philosophical writing, will be discussed as fictions. To cite one example of this approach, Robert Alter's *The Art of Biblical Narrative* contains a chapter called "Sacred History and the Beginnings of Prose Fiction" in which

texts, which many regard as non-fiction, are analysed precisely as fiction (Alter, 1981: 23-47). This approach also means that no one fictional *genre* will be privileged above others. Historically, there have been attempts to regard, say, poetry or tragic drama as qualitatively superior literary expressions to novels or comedies, but the outcome of much theorising has been that it is a matter of how such texts are received, rather than of how they are constituted.

If one comes to the authors Hölderlin and Rilke from the background of German culture and scholarship, then they tend to appear quite differently from their guise in contexts where Heidegger discusses them. The window onto Hölderlin's work opened by Heidegger's texts is a very narrow one. Hölderlin was publishing poems from 1791 onwards, and also wrote a novel *Hyperion oder der Eremit in Griechenland* (*Hyperion or The Hermit in Greece*), but Heidegger cites very little from before 1800. After 1806, mental illness prevented Hölderlin from continuing to write at all in his late hymnic mode, and 1803 is usually accepted as the date of the last hymn he was able to complete, *Mnemosyne*. To read what are termed the "hymnic fragments", the often rambling drafts of late poems Hölderlin could not finish, is a very moving experience, since occasional jewels of vivid imagery or coherent statement are found among the incomplete sentences, disordered syntax, large gaps in the text and other signs of mental breakdown.

Heidegger is not averse to lifting such "jewels", such terse, obscure statements from their quite disunified contexts without revealing their origin. In like manner, he quotes lines the poet ultimately rejected in the final version of a poem as if they were independent sayings. The likely reason for this practice is that such quotes tend to sound very like the preserved fragments of the Pre-Socratics. Running through Heidegger's texts is the quite explicit thesis that Hölderlin's language and thought have an especial affinity with the Pre-Socratics. In this sense, in his commentary on Hölderlin's hymn *Der Rhein*, first delivered as a lecture in early 1935, Heidegger states:

With this eighth strophe, the poet's thought attains one of the highest and most solitary peaks in Western thought, and this means at the same time: of Being. [...] On the mountain-peak he has now reached, Hölderlin dwells in proximity with the thinkers of the inception of our occidental history, not because Hölderlin is dependent on them but because he is inceptively an inceptor – an inceptor of that inception, which has been awaiting vainly both today and through the ages its coming to power. (Heidegger, 1980, 269)

An echo of the times is audible in the word Heidegger uses for “coming to power”, *Ermächtigung*, since the law giving Hitler dictatorial powers was the *Ermächtigungsgesetz* of 23 March 1933. Here Heidegger also touches on the enigma of the “history of Being”, and I shall return to this puzzle later. What Heidegger’s focus on a small number of texts from about five years of Hölderlin’s productive life achieves is to make Hölderlin appear much less typical of his own age than is the case. Hölderlin’s artistic development is steeped in German Hellenism and German Idealism, with all that implies in terms of metaphysics. It was no coincidence that Hölderlin received his higher education in the Tübinger Stift, a protestant seminary, in the company of Hegel and Schelling and that they together composed a text, since called *Das Älteste Systemprogramm [des deutschen Idealismus]* (*The First Systematic Program [of German Idealism]*) (Hölderlin, 1969: 2, 647-49). The draft manifesto, a fragment of which is preserved in Hegel’s handwriting, was composed in the years 1795-97 (Kreuzer, ed., 2002: 38ff.).

Heidegger was more willing to admit Hölderlin’s congruity with the metaphysics of his age in 1934-35 than he was later:

But history is always the unique history of the people in question, in this case of the people to which this poet belongs, the history of Germania. Now and to the extent we know who this man is in his essence, we have attained that which we were seeking: *the metaphysical locus of Hölderlinic poetry*. That is the centre of Being itself, the Being of the demigods, the Being of the man, of our poet. We recall what the latter says of himself [...]: “But now day breaks! I waited, saw its coming,/ And let what I saw, the Holy, be my word” (Heidegger, 1980: 288).

Certainly, there is a movement in Heidegger’s texts away from this position and towards seeing selected passages from Hölderlin as the very antithesis of metaphysics – notably in *Wozu Dichter?* (*To What End Poets?*) of 1946 – but the lectures and essays of the mid-thirties, when Heidegger turned to Hölderlin with a vengeance, should not simply be ignored. The point is that the more Hölderlin is isolated from the context of his whole work and the context of his *own* age, the easier it becomes to present him as an honorary Pre-Socratic, knowingly “belonging to Heraclitus’ understanding of Being” (Heidegger, 1980: 123).

The problems raised by Heidegger’s treatment of those few texts by Rilke he cites are quite different. In section 8e of his lectures on Parmenides in early 1943, Heidegger castigates Rilke severely for misunderstanding – in the eighth *Duineser Elegie* – the concept of “the Open”:

What Rilke terms “the Open”, principally in the eighth of his *Duino Elegies*, has nothing but the sound of the same words in common with what the thinking of the essence of αληθεια comprehends in the term “the Open”. A brief explanation of what Rilke means by “the Open” can assist us to form a more stable concept and to be ready for a more clarified contemplation of what is thought in the essential realm of αληθεια by means of a resolute differentiation from the Rilkean word. [...] It is necessary only to point out unambiguously, that Rilke’s naming of “the Open” is different in every respect from what is conceived concerning “the Open” in its essential relation to αληθεια and from what is to be conceived in terms of a conceptual question (Heidegger, 1982: 227).

This is a topic to which he will return in his essay of 1946 on Rilke, *Wozu Dichter?*, in the essay collection *Holzwege* – an essay that allegedly set out to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Rilke’s death – but, by and large, recurs to the strictures of the lectures on Parmenides. In point of fact, what Heidegger claims as his “discoveries” with regard to the relation of poetic language to the world of objects and common experience had already been anticipated in print by Rilke in his essays on aesthetics between 1898 and 1903 (Stephens, 1976: 94-114), and Rilke, essentially, had done no more than draw his own original conclusions from the questions already posed by French Symbolism. Heidegger appears to have been blissfully ignorant of them – a *sine qua non* of his denigration of Rilke. Had Heidegger taken the trouble to read Mallarmé, then he could have scarcely presented his essentially old-fashioned poetics with the panache he does. But then, he had, quite arbitrarily, selected Hölderlin’s latest poetry as the apogee of Western poetic achievement, and in this template there was no room for what European poetry had accomplished since Baudelaire. The hagiography that has attached itself to Heidegger’s poetics has no defence but wilful ignorance.

I have retranslated the poem by Rilke, *Wie die Natur die Wesen überläßt* [...], that Heidegger discusses at length in *Wozu Dichter?*, since the translation by Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes in *Off the Beaten Track* makes the German syntax of the closing lines very ambiguous, and quite unnecessarily so:

As Nature leaves its creatures to the daring
of their blunt drive to pleasure, chooses none
to protect among earth-clods or boughs: so we
are no more cherished by the primal
ground of our being; *it dares us*. Only we
go *with* this daring, further than plants or beasts,
and will it; sometimes we dare even more

(and not because we're drawn by selfishness)
 than life itself dares, just a breath's span more daring...
 This gains us, in our unprotectedness,
 a safe place there, just where the gravity
 of pure forces takes effect; in the end, what
 shelters us is our exposure, and, when we saw it turn
 threatening, that we faced it towards the Open,
 so that we might affirm it somewhere in
 the furthest round, where law impinges on us

(Rilke, 1996, 2: 324)

In *Off the Beaten Track* the “it” which ends the translation of this poem offers a choice of antecedents: “law”, “the open”, “our defenselessness” (Young and Haynes, eds., 2002: 207). The real antecedent in the original text is “*Schutzlossein*”, which I have rendered at that point as “exposure” to avoid a repetition of the more literal, close synonym “unprotectedness” earlier in the text. This is an untitled poem written on 4.6.1924, and not published in Rilke’s lifetime, as a dedication in a copy of Rilke’s novel *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* (begun 1904, published 1910). The copy was sent on behalf of Rilke’s wife Clara to Hellmuth Freiherr Lucius von Stöedner. In this poem, written more than two years after the eighth *Duineser Elegie*, there is nothing to say that Rilke is working with the same understanding of “the Open” that he develops there, where it is used as a conjectural foil to bring out the limitations of human perception of the world, which is evoked – in opposition to what animals may experience – as being “closed” in various senses (Stephens, 1972: 178ff.; Engel, ed., 2004: 380ff.). Indeed, the third last line suggests human consciousness may here indeed have some access to “the Open”, which the text of the eighth *Duineser Elegie* emphatically denies. However that be, underlying all Heidegger’s strictures on Rilke is the assumption that Rilke, like Hölderlin, strove to reflect in his work one unified world-view. In the tradition of German Idealism, Hölderlin *did* for as long as he was able. Rilke did *not*, and this is one of the oldest conundrums of scholarship on Rilke.

Three years before Heidegger’s lectures on Parmenides, a British scholar, Eudo C. Mason, had published in German, indeed in Weimar, a very lucid monograph showing that not only did Rilke’s work *not* offer a coherent vision of life, but that he did not even make the effort to fake one (Mason, 1939). Mason’s book is carried by a tone of sustained indignation, since he is writing from a Christian point of view and sees Rilke’s works as mimicking Christianity, but with a lack of religious commitment. Mason

was addressing a problem that was already endemic in Rilke-criticism, namely that it was easy to represent Rilke as espousing virtually any world-view current at the time – so long as one did not demand absolute consistency. Rilke is a kind of intellectual chameleon, taking on the conceptual structures of many discourses of his times, but using them purely for aesthetic purposes. Within the individual poem, Rilke's consistency of thought is perfect. One must, however, exercise extreme caution in assuming that the same word or semantic cluster has a meaning that is transferable out of one context and into another. Rilke's poems are entirely lacking in warning signals to the reader. One perceptive critic summed up the resulting dilemmas by stating that "Rilke's poetry is so constituted as to be able to respond to philosophical questions", with the disconcerting implication that it does not matter greatly which questions one asks (Hamburger, 1966: 179). In a previous study on Rilke, I glossed what Rilke had termed – at the age of twenty-four – his quest "to find images for my own transformations" by stating: "here it is important to realise that [...] intellectual structures may function precisely as *images*" (Stephens, 1972: 193).

The key to this unusual quality of Rilke's work was available to the general reader as early as 1931, when his letters and diaries from the years 1899-1902 were published. In a diary entry from 1900, Rilke boldly set forth his lack of esteem for the law of contradiction: "I fear within myself only those contradictions that have a tendency towards resolution.... " (Rilke, 1931: 203). He was to sustain and exemplify this attitude through every phase of his work.

How all this relates to Heidegger's attacks on Rilke in the lectures on Parmenides and the essay of 1946, when Rilke had been dead since 1926, is best summed up by the fact that – in terms of Rilke's poetic practice – Heidegger was tilting at windmills. Rilke simply had not aspired to have a stable concept of "the Open". In his one attempt to explain what he may have meant by it in the eighth *Duineser Elegie*, he is extremely tentative and speaks of the concept he has "attempted to suggest" ("*vorzuschlagen versucht habe*") – thus claiming no ultimate conceptual validity for it (Betz, 1938: 291). Rilke came relatively late to discover and admire intensely the work of Hölderlin, and set forth in a poem entitled *An Hölderlin (To Hölderlin)*, written in 1914 when Rilke was 38 and first published in 1934, eight years after his death, his understanding of Hölderlin's imperative towards a wholeness of vision and his own quite opposite situation. The poem reads in part:

To linger, even at what is most familiar,
 is not given to us; from fulfilled
 images the mind plummets to ones waiting for sudden fulfilment; lakes
 exist only in the eternal. Falling is here
 what we achieve best. From the feeling we've mastered
 to plunge down into that we anticipate, further.

But to you, you splendid one, to you, you conjurer, a whole life was given
 to feel as an urgent image, when you spoke it out,
 each line closed like destiny, death was
 even in the gentlest, and you entered it; but
 the god who preceded you led you out and above it

(Rilke 2, 1996: 123).

Since this poem was published in the same volume as the dedicatory poem, *Wie die Natur die Wesen überläßt [...]*, on which Heidegger *did* comment in detail, the fundamental difference between the two poets had been clearly spelled out by one of them in a book Heidegger read, but Heidegger simply chose to ignore the fact. Why?

I suggest that it stems from a fiction Heidegger terms “the history of Being”, whose strong agenda makes it necessary for Rilke’s poetry to “remain back behind that of Hölderlin on the course of the history of Being as far as rank and position are concerned” (Heidegger, 1950: 276). The word Heidegger uses for course, *Bahn*, implies linear movement, in time since it occurs in the German words for race-track, ghost-train, tram-line and, of course, *Autobahn*. Does *this* “history of Being” run backwards in time? It appears so in Heidegger’s essay on Rilke, *Wozu Dichter?*. Here Hölderlin is called the “precursor” whom “no poet of our age can overtake”. Why? “The precursor does not [...] disappear into a future, but he arrives *from* the future in such a manner that it is only in the arrival of his word that the future achieves presence” (Heidegger, 1950: 320).

My answer to this puzzle is that Heidegger posits two different “histories of Being”, and that one of them does reverse time-sequences. For Heidegger pulls the same trick on Nietzsche in 1935, as he does on Rilke in 1946. At the conclusion of his lectures on *Der Rhein* in 1935, Heidegger states:

What Hölderlin here sees as the essence of historical being, the emotional intensities in conflict between what is an endowment and what is a task, was rediscovered by Nietzsche and termed the Dionysian and Apollonian, but not in such simplicity and purity as Hölderlin; for in the intervening time Nietzsche had had to traverse all those fatal circumstances that are denoted by the names Schopenhauer, Darwin, Wagner, and the term

“founding years” [of the German Empire]. [...] The hour of our history has now struck. [...] The force of Being must now once more and in reality become a question for our powers of comprehension (Heidegger, 1980: 294).

Coming later in time, Nietzsche’s “discovery” has to be inferior. As Heidegger reiterated in his interview with *Der Spiegel* in 1966: “I do not consider Hölderlin to be just *any* poet, whose work literary historians also treat together with many others’. Hölderlin is for me the poet, who points into the future, who awaits the god” (Thomä, ed., 2003: 214; Wolin ed., 1993: 112). Thus we have one qualitative “history of Being” proceeding backwards in leaps from the future god, to Hölderlin, to the Pre-Socratics and – conceivably – to the mythic age posited in Hölderlin’s later poems, when gods and humans mingled.

Michel Haar, in his work *La Fracture de l'Histoire* (*The Breaking of History*) refers to the present-day disjunction in historical thinking, which he characterises as a:

[...] breaking apart, or being cast loose from one another, of two Histories, previously distinct from but strictly coordinated with one another [...]: on the one hand empirical history, the entanglement of facts; on the other, epochal History, the development of the principles of intelligibility, “Universal history” in Hegelian terms, “the History of Being” according to Heidegger (Haar, 1994: 10).

But I suggest we must see Heidegger’s “history of Being” as having *two* different versions which are placed in no clear relationship to one another.

There is the one philosophers prefer that does no violence to chronology. As Emil Angehrn sets it out in the *Heidegger-Handbuch*, one of a series of recent and authoritative compendia on major German authors and thinkers:

In this sense metaphysics is to be regarded as a basic historical process – not as a misguided manner of thought and doctrine – and nihilism as its essential form deriving from the “fate of Being itself” [...]. What is demanded of humankind is not to invent new forms of thought, but an openness to that which comes towards it, and to let itself be spoken to by what [...] reveals itself. [...] The processuality of the history of Being does not mean that it takes place anywhere else than in the medium of human creations – in science, technology, art, politics. [...] Only that openness to being addressed, which includes the “courage to feel essential anxiety” (as the locus of the experience of nothingness, and thus also of Being), is what is required of humankind” (Thomä, ed., 2003: 274ff.).

In such a scenario, Hölderlin's poetry as a revelation of truth, interrupting the progressive descent into complete nihilism, plays no part at all, and, indeed, the American scholar Jeffrey A. Barash published in 2003 the second edition of an informed and detailed study called *Martin Heidegger and the Problem of Historical Meaning* without mentioning Hölderlin in the context of a rearranging of history at all: for Barash the chronological process moves with its wonted linearity and with no reversals.

Why does Heidegger need the other version? In the final sections of *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time*) Heidegger first sees *Dasein* as being potentially integrated in a positive sense into a community (Wolin, 1990: 54-58). Heidegger's enthusiasm for National Socialism in the years 1931-1934 has two consequences: firstly, there appears that subordination of the present to a glowing future he articulates in his letter to Elisabeth Blochmann a week after Hitler's *Ermächtigungsgesetz* was passed: "We shall find it [the new ground] and, at the same time, the vocation of the German in Occidental history only when we expose ourselves to Being itself in a new mode of experiencing and assimilating it. Thus I experience the present purely in terms of the future." (Heidegger, 1990: 60). Secondly, in the same letter to her, the German *Volk* can be named as the best of all possible communities: "Present events have for me [...] an enormous concentrating power. To be active in the service of a great mission enhances the will and the certainty of helping to construct a world that is based in the people [*volklich*]" (ibid.; Thomä, ed., 2003: 525). As James Phillips rightly states: "In 1933, Heidegger attempts to lead the masses of National Socialism to the confrontation with classical ontology from which the *Volk* might have been born" (Phillips, 2005: 131).

Heidegger's failure as a Nazi politician is immediately followed by the celebration of Hölderlin in his lectures (Risser, ed., 1995: 5ff.). Hölderlin's poems after 1800 abound in visions of ideal, future communities. Hence there is a clear element of displacement from the grubby arena of party politics to the pristine spaces of the poetic word. Heidegger denies in 1934 that lecturing on Hölderlin was a personal choice at all, rather: "This choice is no capricious selection from among the poets available. This choice is an historical decision". Why? Because Hölderlin, he says, is not only the greatest poet of the German nation, but also because his light is still hidden, and: "for this reason he has not yet become *the* power in the history of our people. Because he is not it yet, he must become it. To participate in this process is 'politics' in the highest and genuine sense [...]" (Heidegger, 1980: 214).

The celebration of Hölderlin is thus proclaimed to be "political" activity in a more exalted sphere than the one in which Heidegger has just

signally failed. Since Hölderlin envisages the future return of the gods, the dominance of a radiant future over present and past does not have to be abandoned. His installation of Hitler as the authority that guarantees the future in the letter to Elisabeth Blochmann of 30 March 1933 – “So I experience the present wholly in terms of the future” (Heidegger, 1990: 60) – stands in clear parallel to his subjection of the present to Hölderlin’s poetry in the introduction to his lectures on *Germanien* and *Der Rhein*: “We do not wish to make Hölderlin accord with our own age, but, on the contrary: we wish to subject ourselves and those to come to the measure of the poet” (Heidegger, 1980: 4).

The only problem is that, between Heidegger’s own era and the few years at the start of the 19th century when Hölderlin wrote the poems Heidegger refers to endlessly, there is a kind of temporal trough of about 140 years into which the achievements of Nietzsche and Rilke fall. Both have to fail in comparison with Hölderlin, because Hölderlin’s only true peers are the Pre-Socratics. Thus, from 1934 onwards, Heidegger becomes more and more critical of Nietzsche, and, in 1946, Rilke, whose prestige in Germany as a poet in the 40’s rivalled that of Hölderlin, has to be again put down and presented as a Hölderlin *manqué*, although Heidegger had access to all that was needful for him to avoid this distortion of Rilke’s work – most of all the poem quoted above in which Rilke himself is both unstinting in his admiration of Hölderlin and perfectly clear as to the fundamental difference between their two poetic projects. Instead, he still quibbles as to the right understanding of the concept of “the Open”, so as to show Rilke as being helplessly entangled in “present-day metaphysics”, hence lagging behind Hölderlin.

I suggest therefore that Heidegger’s portrayal of Hölderlin and Rilke is dictated by the fictional structure of that alternative “history of Being” that is subordinated to a vision of future salvation. The poets are thereby cut to size in the sense that they are shaped to fit a pattern that has its origins outside the work of either of them. At its most basic, Heidegger’s doubling of the “history of Being” can be seen as an oscillation within his apocalypics. When he wishes to accent the positive, soteric aspect, Hölderlin’s poetry is necessary as an anticipation of the world to come, and this means that time has to be rearranged so that Hölderlin is “the precursor” who “arrives *from* the future” (Heidegger, 1950: 320), thus assigning to the poet the same role Hölderlin himself had assigned to Christ in his great elegy *Brod und Wein* (*Bread and Wine*). What this might have to do with philosophy in the 20th century eludes me, but it is a standard pattern in German Romantic visions of an ideal futurity, which, in turn, revive early Christian eschatology. When Heidegger’s

apocalyptic lack the soteric dimension and are weighed down by his pessimism as to the increasing dominance of technology in history, then they rather follow the Old Norse pattern of history degenerating into the *Fimbulvinter*, the Great Winter presaging the end of the world, with no redemption and no prospect but catastrophe. This variant leaves chronology unscathed.

The soteric history of Being has staying power. In the interview with *Der Spiegel* in 1966 Heidegger insists: “only a god can save us”. We can see *this* “history of Being” as a sublimation of the hopes he had initially placed in Hitler’s regime. When he states late in his life: “Hölderlin is for me the poet who points into the future, who awaits the god” (Thomä, ed., 2003: 214), then Hölderlin has had transferred onto him the whole burden of futurity – but at what cost?

Ultimately none, since most recent writing on Heidegger seems to live happily with two different “histories of Being”. As for the poets, only those readers who approach them *solely* through Heidegger’s texts will face grossly selective, exaggerated or distorted versions of their work. The question is rather: what does it say about a philosophy that it depends on dual versions of the same “history” and that one of them is anchored by an irrational conception of part of the achievement of one poet?

Heidegger’s impact on the reception of both poets in Germany was greatest in the 50’s and early 60’s of the 20th century and diminished sharply with the swing to the left of the “1968 generation”. Once the short-lived Marxist dominance in German literary scholarship was over, there was no return to Heideggerian positions and terminology. Recent German scholarship on the topic of Heidegger and Hölderlin tends to cast a cold eye on Heidegger’s glorification of the poet. Thus Kathleen Wright states in the recent *Heidegger-Handbuch*:

Heidegger explicitly makes a hero of Hölderlin – indeed both during and after the Hitler-era, by assigning the leading role to Hölderlin and poetry (and only to Hölderlin’s poetry) in the drama in which the destinies and the future of Germany and Europe unfold. At the same time he magnifies himself since he gives his own thought (and only his own thought) the only important minor role in the same unfolding drama (Thomä, ed., 2003: 214).

In the corresponding *Hölderlin-Handbuch* of 2002, Iris Buchheim notes that it is no surprise that many influential German literary scholars can find only Heidegger and no Hölderlin in the former’s writings, given “the persistent rejection of all scholarship, the isolation of Hölderlin from his Idealist, indeed ‘metaphysical context’, which is accompanied by an

increasing conflation of Hölderlin's poetry with his own thinking on the 'history of Being'" (Kreuzer, ed., 2002: 437).

The renaissance Heidegger is currently experiencing in the English-speaking world does not seem to have caught on in Germany. The most significant recent essay in Heideggerian aesthetics, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's *Production of Presence. What Meaning Cannot Convey* (Gumbrecht, 2004) is the work of a scholar trained in Germany, but teaching at Stanford. It was written in English and addresses an English-speaking readership. The question of whether a Heidegger renaissance is possible in Germany is in part a linguistic issue. Heidegger's German style is so excessively idiosyncratic that it polarises readers. The '50s of the last century saw a good deal of literary criticism written in what was effectively a Heideggerian dialect, and it is difficult to write *with* the current of Heidegger's thought without lapsing into some such mode of discourse. It sits very oddly with contemporary German usage.

Translations of Heidegger into English perforce normalise his style to a great extent, because his etymological word-plays and range of neologising have no direct equivalents in English. Translation must needs sacrifice some of the resonances of Heidegger's German for the sake of intelligibility, and this disguises a lot that is quintessentially Heideggerian.

Rilke scholarship in Germany underwent the same phase of a strong Heideggerian influence in the 50's and 60's, of which Else Buddeberg's book *Denken und Dichten des Seins (Thought and Poetry of Being)* is a characteristic example (Buddeberg, 1956). It is written in a Heideggerian style, and is so much of its times that it does not rate even a mention in the brief bibliography on Rilke and Heidegger in the *Rilke-Handbuch* of 2004 (Engel, ed., 2004: 164). Even studies such as Buddeberg's have an ambivalent approach to Heidegger's relegation of Rilke to a lowly status in *Wozu Dichter?*. While writing in a Heideggerian mode, the impulse is tacitly to contradict Heidegger's evaluation of Rilke by showing that he was, after all, a true "poet of Being". It was with a certain sense of relief that Rilke scholars greeted the change in the intellectual climate of Germany around 1968, since, while Marxist criticism had little time for Rilke, it had even less for Heidegger and thus broke the hagiographical nexus once and for all.

Rilke has survived as the major poet writing in German in the 20th century, and the issues raised by Heidegger in his lectures on Parmenides and his interpretation of *Wie die Natur die Wesen überläßt [...]* have no presence in Rilke-scholarship today. This leads to the conclusion that Heidegger's treatment of both poets ultimately reveals more about Heidegger than it does about them – indeed it offers an external point of

view on Heidegger's modes of thought at a time when writing on him in English is by no means free of hagiography. The agenda of the "history of Being" that exalts the late Hölderlin and denigrates Rilke is very revealing of Heidegger's compulsive behaviour. Taking advantage of the twentieth anniversary of Rilke's death in 1946 to resolve a spurious debate on the true nature of "the Open" at Rilke's expense and in Hölderlin's (and thus implicitly his own) favour is, in one sense, a reversed re-enactment of the political battles he lost in 1933-34.

In the decades following on the collapse of Nazism, Heidegger's voice was heard loud and clear in Germany. Indeed, he had very little competition. The displacement that had attended his withdrawal from Nazi politics and subsequent celebration of the late Hölderlin can be seen as an escapist strategy that was to have its own appeal in a country devastated by war. One reason for the popularity of the poetry of both Hölderlin and Rilke during and after the second World War – irrespective of what Heidegger thought of either – was that both their poetic worlds, as different as they are, offered a refuge from grim realities. This appeal was not lessened in the two post-war decades, and it is an interesting phenomenon that the turning of young West Germans to Marxism did not occur until the *Wirtschaftswunder* (economic miracle) had been accomplished.

That Giorgio Agamben should revive the difference of viewpoint between Heidegger and Rilke on the concept of "the Open" in his work of 2002 challenges us to speculate whether this is a sign of things to come or mere nostalgia. In any event, Agamben gets his philology wrong. The term does not originate in Rilke's eighth *Duineser Elegie*, as he claims (Agamben, 2004: 57), but was likely taken over from one of Hölderlin's best known poems *Brod und Wein*: "So komm! daß wir das Offene schauen/ Daß ein Eigenes wir suchen, so weit es auch ist" ("So come! that we may look upon the Open/ That we seek something of our own, far distant though it may be") (Hölderlin, 1969: 1, 115). In its original setting the term connotes a realm of freedom for the imagination and correlates later in the same stanza with the fantasy of a voyage of the spirit back to Ancient Greece: "Drum an den Isthmos komm! dorthin, wo das offene Meer rauscht/Am Parnass und der Schnee delphische Felsen umglänzt [...]" ("Therefore come to the Isthmus! there, where the open sea surges/By Parnassus and snow shines about the Delphic cliffs [...]" (ibid.)). Both Rilke and Heidegger would have been aware of this.

Rilke had made the acquaintance of Norbert von Hellingrath, the editor of the pioneering Hölderlin edition, in 1910 and was in contact with his

editorial project from 1911 onwards. It may thus be the case that lines in a poem finished by Rilke in 1912, *Perlen entrollen* (*Pearls are spilled*) is an early reminiscence of *Brod und Wein* with none of the later connotations of the concept in the eighth *Duineser Elegie* at all: “*O wie ein Golf hofft ins Offne/und vom gestreckten Leuchtturm/ scheinende Räume wirft [...]*” (“Oh, as a gulf hopes towards the Open/ and from its stretched lighthouse/throws luminous spaces [...]” (Rilke, 1996: 2, 38). The sea-imagery and the evocation of vast spaces seem to establish a connection to Hölderlin, but one looks in vain for the epistemological concerns of the eighth *Duineser Elegie*. This illustrates how careful one must be in dealing with Rilkean concepts from poem to poem.

Heidegger was not careful at all, and so, as Agamben must acknowledge (Agamben, 2004: 57ff.), he comes to represent Rilke, in his lectures on Parmenides, as an ignoramus: “Rilke knows and suspects nothing of ἀληθεια; he knows and suspects as little as does Nietzsche. Accordingly Rilke is entirely confined within the borders of the traditional metaphysical definition of human and animal” (Heidegger, 1982: 231). But Rilke continues to be read and esteemed – as does Heidegger, for all that *he* knew and suspected nothing of the nature of poetic fictions.

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GEOGRAPHY, BIOLOGY AND POLITICS: HEIDEGGER ON PLACE AND WORLD

JEFF MALPAS

I.

Heidegger claimed that one of the unique features of his thinking in the 1920s was his discovery, or rediscovery, of the problem of world. The concept of world figures prominently in Part One, Division One, of *Being and Time*, but Heidegger remained dissatisfied with his treatment of the matter there, frequently returning to the problem in his work in the period immediately following the publication of *Being and Time* – most obviously in the 1929 lectures on *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*. In those lectures Heidegger responds to the problem at issue by exploring the difference between the mode of being proper to the animal and the human, and, in so doing, he draws upon a range of biological and zoological studies from the previous forty years or so including the work of figures such as the experimental embryologist Wilhelm Roux, the Czech biologist Emmanuel Radl, the neo-vitalist biologist Hans Driesch, and the pioneering ethologist, Jakob von Uexküll.

The way Heidegger draws upon these scientific sources, and who he draws upon (most of these figures form part of the anti-materialist movement in German science that is the subject of Anne Harrington's excellent *Reenchanting Science*¹), is itself of interest for what it tells us about Heidegger's knowledge of the scientific thinking of his time. In his own more recent examination of the relation between the human and the animal, the essay, *The Open*, Giorgio Agamben discusses von Uexküll's work, in particular, with specific reference to Heidegger, but he also connects that work, both that of von Uexküll and Heidegger, with the work of two prominent geographical theorists, Paul Vidal de la Blanche and Friedrich Ratzel. Agamben writes:

¹ Anne Harrington, *Reenchanting Science: Holism in German Culture from Wilhelm II to Hitler* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

The studies by the founder of ecology follow a few years after those by Paul Vidal de la Blanche on the relationship between populations and their environment (the *Tableau de la géographie de la France* is from 1903), and those of Friedrich Ratzel on the *Lebensraum*, the ‘vital space’ of peoples (the *Politische Geographie* is from 1897), which would profoundly revolutionize human geography of the twentieth century. And it is not impossible that the central thesis of *Sein und Zeit* on being-in-the-world (*In-der-Welt-sein*) as the fundamental human structure can be read in some ways as a response to this problematic field, which at the beginning of the century essentially modified the traditional relationship between the living being and its environment-world. As is well-known, Ratzel’s theses, according to which all peoples are intimately linked to their vital space as their essential dimension, had a notable influence on Nazi geopolitics. This proximity is marked in a curious episode in Uexküll’s intellectual biography. In 1928, five years before the advent of Nazism, this very sober scientist writes a preface to Houston Chamberlain’s *Die Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* {*Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*}, today considered one of the precursors of Nazism.²

It is this passage that constitutes the starting point for my discussion here – and it does so, not because I want to treat of Heidegger, or Agamben’s, discussion of the relation between the human and the animal (the topic that has preoccupied most commentators), but rather because of the way Agamben’s comments point towards a range of issues concerning the relation between the geographical and the political in Heidegger – more specifically, the connection between themes in Heidegger’s thinking and supposedly problematic elements in earlier geographical thought from the nineteenth and early twentieth century, as well as the way that Heidegger’s thought has interacted with aspects of cultural geography over the last thirty or so years.

These issues clearly connect up, as Agamben’s comments imply, with the ongoing argument concerning the political associations of Heidegger’s thought and its proximity to National Socialism. In this latter respect, it also connects with a set of questions concerning the possible political associations of those elements of geographical thinking with which Heidegger is here brought into connection. However, in taking these geographical connections as the focus here, my main aim is to open up an exploration of certain aspects of the role played by ideas of place and space in Heidegger’s work, and, with this, the possibility of an expanded dialogue between the philosophical and the geographical. To make the

² Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp.42-43.

connection with the main theme of this volume explicit: the aesthetics of dwelling that we find in the later Heidegger, and that is already prefigured (although in a less than integrated fashion) in elements of the earlier thinking, has to be understood in terms of the centrality to Heidegger's thinking of a concept that is also central to cultural-geographic thought, namely, the concept of place or 'geographic' space – *topos*, *Ort*, *Ortschaft*³. Agamben's comments highlight this connection through their juxtaposition of Heidegger's philosophy with the geographical thought of Ratzel and Vidal de la Blanche (which is not to ignore the important connection with von Uexküll). In so doing, however, Agamben also indicates the way in which it is precisely the connection between, as we may put it, the philosophical and the geographical that can be seen as reinforcing the politically problematic character of Heidegger's thinking. Yet not only is the manner in which Agamben draws this connection highly misleading in this regard, but it also neglects any real consideration of what might be at issue in the centrality of the 'geographical', or better, the topological, in Heidegger's thought. Indeed, notwithstanding Heidegger's own personal political engagement, there is reason to think that the role played by the concept of place in his thought actually runs counter to the associations that are often taken to belong with it.

II.

One of the important developments within cultural geography in the last quarter of the twentieth century has been the rise of a movement often referred to as 'humanistic geography' that draws heavily on the work of Husserl as well as Heidegger, and that has given a special emphasis to the concept of place as a central and determining notion in geographical inquiry. The key figures in this development include writers such as Yi-Fu Tuan,⁴ Edward Relph,⁵ Anne Buttimer and David Seamon,⁶ and their

³ For a more detailed account of the topological character of Heidegger's thinking see my *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006).

⁴ See, for instance, Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977).

⁵ Relph's *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion, 1976) is a particularly influential text in the area.

⁶ See, amongst other works, Anne Buttimer and David Seamon (eds.), *The Human Experience of Space and Place* (London: Croom Helm, 1980); also David Seamon and Robert Mugerauer (eds.), *Dwelling, Place, and Environment: Towards a Phenomenology of Person and World* (New York: Columbia University Press,

work has not been restricted in its influence to geography alone. Indeed, humanistic geography has come to be allied with a mode of place-oriented environmental thinking that encompasses writers in a wide range of disciplines from sociology to psychology, from anthropology to architecture. Within this broad field, Heidegger's 'Bauen Wohnen Denken' ('Building Dwelling Thinking')⁷ has often appeared as a key text. Moreover, that tradition is also one that can be seen to connect up with, and draw upon, the work of Vidal de la Blanche – a point that might be thought to confirm the associations suggested by Agamben. Yet, in fact, the way in which Vidal de la Blanche plays a role here is itself indicative of the need for a certain degree of caution in attempting to delineate the connections and lines of influence that might be thought to be at stake, since the Vidalian tradition as it appears within American geography is itself often counter-posed to Ratzelian thinking rather than being allied with it – and this so in spite of the Ratzelian influences on Vidal de la Blanche himself. Moreover, humanistic geography draws heavily on phenomenology, on Husserl as much as Heidegger, as well as on writers such as Bachelard and Merleau-Ponty. How are we to situate that broader phenomenological tradition, within which the idea of a close connection between human being and space or place is also a recurrent theme (especially as developed in the work of Bachelard and Merleau-Ponty), in terms of the problematic set of connections sketched out by Agamben?

As Agamben presents matters, Heidegger, von Uexküll, Ratzel and Vidal de la Blanche all share the same basic commitment to a conception of human being as essentially bound up with its environment or world – in Heideggerian terms, human being is being-there (*Da-sein*) which is being-in-the-world. Such a commitment, as I indicated a moment ago, is also one

1985). For an excellent survey of recent articles on humanistic geography see Paul Adams, Steven Hoelscher and Karen E Till (eds), *Textures of Place: Exploring Humanist Geographies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001). It should be emphasized, however, that this is not the only route through which Heidegger's influence has been felt in contemporary geography. Heidegger has, of course, had a major impact on geographic thinking simply in virtue of the enormous impact he has had on twentieth century thought in general, but Heidegger's specific focus on concepts and space and place has also had, in addition to the immediate effect of essays such as 'Bauen Wohnen Denken', a significant indirect impact through its effect on key thinkers as Foucault and Lefebvre – see, especially, Stuart Elden, *Mapping the Present: Heidegger, Foucault and the project of a spatial history* (London: Continuum, 2001).

⁷ In *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Stuttgart: Günther Neske Verlag, 1954); the English translation appears in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1975).

that we take to be a central element in the work of Bachelard and Merleau-Ponty, although Agamben makes no such connection. While it remains only at the level of suggestion, and is never spelt out, Agamben implies that this commitment is itself one that brings Heidegger, von Uexküll, Ratzel and Vidal de la Blanche into close proximity to Nazism – a proximity that Agamben takes as given special emphasis, not only by Ratzel's supposed influence on Nazi ideology (and presumably by Heidegger's own Nazi affiliations), but also by von Uexküll's endorsement of Chamberlain. The latter, of course, not only draws these thinkers into the domain of National Socialism as a broad political movement with a range of different associations, but, more specifically, into proximity with National Socialist racialism and anti-Semitism.

The drawing of such connections and associations is not peculiar to Agamben, but is an often implicit, and sometimes explicit, assumption in the work of many writers who engage critically with the 'geographic' elements in Heidegger's thinking. Heidegger's preoccupation with ideas of rootedness and belonging, his apparent preference for the world of peasant and farmer, and his frequent appeal to notions of origin and home, have all been seen as tied to a conservative and even reactionary politics of a sort evident, not only in Heidegger's entanglement with Nazism, but even in his admission late in his life, in the interview with *Der Spiegel* magazine in the 1960s, of his lack of faith in democratic politics. With such ideas clearly in the background, the historian Troy Paddock also draws an explicit connection between Heidegger and Ratzel. Arguing that Heidegger distinguished between two concepts of space, the mathematical or geometric and the geographic, Paddock claims that, taken in this latter sense, Heidegger:

...does not consider space as an abstract entity but as part of a larger environment. Borders help give space a specific location, and consequently a specific function, creating a space that is grounded in the specific building, bridge, or jug... Heidegger's conception of space bears striking parallels to views expressed in the late nineteenth century by the geographer Friedrich Ratzel, who suggested that there was a connection between the physical space that a people inhabited and their culture.⁸

Although Paddock seems to equivocate on the connection between such views and fascism,⁹ he nevertheless claims that Heidegger's adoption

⁸ Troy Paddock, 'Gedachtes Wohnen: Heidegger and Cultural Geography', *Philosophy and Geography* 7 (2004), p.237-8.

⁹ In this respect, the comments in Paddock's reply seem to be rather weaker, and certainly less clear, in the connection they assert between Heidegger, Ratzel and

of such a view of space reveals 'a continued ideological affinity with basic tenets of Nazi ideology'.¹⁰ Paddock makes quite clear that part of his interest in Heidegger's 'geographic' conception of space derives from the way in which Heidegger's thinking has been taken up by contemporary environmentalists, and the clear implication is that such thinking has dangerous affinities with key elements of Nazi ideology, and should, therefore, be treated with extreme caution, if not altogether shunned. Humanistic geography, and the environmental modes of thinking with which it is associated, would seem to turn out, on this account, to be reactionary and politically dangerous. Indeed, such modes of thinking, inasmuch as they do emphasis a special relation between human being and place, often appear in popular, and not merely academic, thinking, as carrying strongly romantic and conservative associations, even if the connection with fascist thinking is not always so evident.

Leaving aside, at least for the moment, some of the broader issues that are at stake here, it should be noted that, in the case of Heidegger himself, the simple fact of his connection with Nazi politics is indisputable – Heidegger was a paid-up member of the Nazi Party from 1933 onwards, and was appointed by the Nazis as Rector of Freiburg University in that same year, resigning one year later. What remains open to dispute is exactly how that connection should be interpreted, what significance should be given to it, and, more particularly, how deeply it can be connected with Heidegger's philosophical thought. In the early 1930s, Heidegger certainly seemed prepared to use ideas and images of autochthony and rootedness that appeared to bring his thought into close alignment with Nazi ideology and rhetoric.¹¹ Yet in terms of the specific claims advanced by such as Paddock, it is notable that while a 'geographic' conception of space is indeed present in Heidegger's works up to and including the early 'thirties (although usually expressed in terms of notions like that of 'rootedness'), it is actually in the works after his

Nazism, than those to be found in his original article – see Paddock, 'In Defense of Homology and History: a Response to Allen', *Philosophy and Geography* 7 (2004), pp.257-8.

¹⁰ Paddock, 'Gedachtes Wohnen', p.248.

¹¹ See, for instance, Charles Bambach's discussion of the role of the idea of 'rootedness' (*Bodenständigkeit*), and associated notions, in Heidegger's writings and speeches from the 1930s in *Heidegger's Roots: Nietzsche, National Socialism, and the Greeks* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), pp.12-68. Bambach argues that the preoccupation with rootedness and autochthony is present throughout Heidegger's thinking, not only in the 1930s, and that these notions are always marked by the logic of exclusion.

resignation from the Rectorate in 1934, and so at a time after his attempt to establish himself as the intellectual leader of a National Socialist Germany had clearly failed, that such a conception, as developed explicitly in terms of place, seems to become much more important.

There is certainly a clear shift in Heidegger's thinking that first occurs in the 'thirties, and intensifies around the late 'forties, towards an explicit concern with place and related concepts – concepts that include those of 'dwelling', the 'Fourfold' and, I would also argue, of the Event (*das Ereignis*) – my own view is that this shift towards the 'geographic' or 'topological' is itself closely tied to the famous 'Turning' or 'Reversal' in Heidegger's thought¹²). There is good reason to suppose that this shift is itself connected to Heidegger's own failed engagement with Nazism, not in the sense that it derives from Nazi ideology, but is instead formed in a reaction to it.¹³ Significantly, it is in his engagement with Hölderlin in 1934-35, immediately *after* his resignation of the Rectorate, that ideas of place and dwelling that lie at the heart of the 'geographic' conception of space that concerns Paddock begin to emerge more explicitly (though still in a relatively undeveloped form) as a focus for Heidegger's thinking. Thus one finds, at the same time as Heidegger's thought orients itself more towards 'geographic' or 'place-based' conceptions, a shift away from, and sometimes direct criticism of, key elements of associated with Nazi ideology. One might argue, of course, that this shift is simply a result of the failure in Heidegger's own political ambitions, and so to treat it as a kind of 'sour grapes' response, and while there may be some truth in this from a biographical perspective, it should not be allowed to obscure the philosophical issues that are nevertheless also involved. Indeed, as we shall see shortly, there is a deep tension between 'geographic' modes of thinking and the type of thinking that is characteristic of Nazi ideology, and this tension becomes apparent, not only in Heidegger's thinking, but also in the work of Ratzel and Vidal de la Blanche.

¹² See my discussion of this in *Heidegger's Topology*, chapter four.

¹³ One might argue that such a reading can be drawn, in part, from James Phillips' argument in *Heidegger's Volk: Between National Socialism and Poetry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), although Phillips focuses more on the idea of 'the people' and the role of poetry in Heidegger's thinking in this period, than on place as such (see, however, Phillips' discussion of the 'uncanny homeland' – '*unheimliche Heimat*' – on pp.169-217).

III.

Just as a closer examination of Heidegger's own involvement with Nazism complicates the attempt to discern a simple line of connection between Heidegger's own fascist politics and his thinking of space and place, so too does a closer examination of the intellectual history that involves Heidegger, Ratzel, Vidal de la Blanche and von Uexküll lead to a more complex picture than that which Agamben implies. To what extent Heidegger's concept of 'being-in-the-world' is actually indebted to or influenced by von Uexküll's concept of Umwelt seems to me debateable – nowhere have I seen any evidence that would demonstrate any direct influence from one to the other as opposed to some convergence of what were otherwise independent lines of thought, although Harrington, for instance, speculates on the possibility of such influence. Heidegger was certainly familiar with von Uexküll's work at the time he wrote *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, and, as Harrington points out, von Uexküll himself drew attention to apparent similarities between his thought and that of Heidegger in a 1937 paper.¹⁴ Yet while the exact nature and extent of any influence of between von Uexküll on Heidegger may be uncertain,¹⁵ there can be no doubt of the connection between von Uexküll and Chamberlain. Indeed, what Agamben omits to tell us, somewhat surprisingly perhaps, is that not only did von Uexküll write a

¹⁴ See Harrington, *Reenchanted Science*, pp.53-4; Harrington refers to Uexküll 'Die neue Umweltlehre. Ein Bindeglied zwischen Natur- und Kultur-Wissenschaft', *Die Erziehung: Monatschrift für den Zusammenhang von Kultur und Erziehung im Wissenschaft und Leben* 13 (1937), p.199.

¹⁵ My own view is that the influence is likely, if it exists at all, to be at a fairly general level simply because of the neo-Kantian subjectivism – which I discuss further below – that is such a central element in Uexküll's thinking, and which Heidegger clearly attempts to avoid, if not entirely successfully, even in *Being and Time*. Heidegger and Uexküll may have both accept a holistic construal of the relation between the human, or animal, and the world, but they differ significantly in the way that holistic relation is understood (the analogy between 'being-in-the-world' and the idea of the animal in its 'umwelt' is thus somewhat superficial, even though both can be seen as exemplifying a similar holistic tendency). The interest in Uexküll that is evident in the lectures that make up Heidegger's *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* seems to be underpinned partly by Heidegger's desire to connect his own thinking with contemporary biological thought, and especially with the holist and anti-mechanist tendencies in that thought, and partly, as I discuss below, by the problem that is presented by Uexküll's talk of the animal as having a world at all – talk that seems in conflict with Heidegger's own account of the animal as 'poor in world'.

preface to Chamberlain's book, but he was himself a close and long-time friend of Chamberlain, having similar anti-Semitic and racist view (although those views were not always apparent in von Uexküll's academic writing). Thus, Harrington quotes from a letter from von Uexküll to Chamberlain in which von Uexküll writes: 'The cohesive power of the Jewish state is admirable. For that, the Jews are completely incapable of building a state. All they produce is just a parasitic net that everywhere corrodes national structures and transforms the Volk into fermenting piles of pulp'.¹⁶

Although Heidegger cites von Uexküll's work in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, he does so, as I noted earlier, along with a number of other prominent biologists and zoologists with similar anti-materialist commitments. Moreover von Uexküll is discussed, not so much because of the possibility of a convergence between his view of the relation between animal and environment, and Heidegger's conception of being-in-the-world, but rather because his approach may be thought to provide a scientific counter to Heidegger's claim that the animal is poor in world – what von Uexküll's work may be taken to show is that the animal does indeed have a world, contrary to Heidegger, albeit a different world from the human. While Heidegger is generous in his estimation of the significance of von Uexküll's work, as of that of the other biologists he discusses (and that generosity may well derive from Heidegger's own sympathies towards their holistic and anti-mechanistic approach), he also concludes that there remains 'a fundamental question whether we should talk of the world of the animal – of an environing world or even of an inner world – or whether we do not have to determine that which the animal stands in relation to in another way'.¹⁷

Heidegger's discussion of von Uexküll in 1929 stands within the essentially Kantian frame of much of Heidegger's thinking from the late 1920s. One of the problems that leads Heidegger away from that Kantian frame is what he comes to regard as its incipient tendency, in spite of Heidegger's own efforts to counter that tendency, towards a form of subjectivism or idealism. Thus, in commenting on a passage from the 1936 essay, 'On the Origin of the Work of Art', Heidegger writes that 'Here lies concealed *the relationship of being to human being*. This relationship is inadequately thought even in this presentation – a distressing difficulty that has been clear to me since *Being and Time*, and has since come under

¹⁶ Letter to Chamberlain, April 10, 1921; quoted in Harrington, *Reenchaned Science*, p.60.

¹⁷ *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, p.264.

discussion in many presentations'.¹⁸ The inadequacy of the presentation seems to lie in the possibility that the relationship at issue might be construed as one in which being is somehow grounded or based in human being – as Heidegger writes elsewhere concerning the way *Dasein* appears in *Being and Time*, the presentation 'still stands in the shadow of the "anthropological," the "subjectivistic," and the "individualist," etc.'¹⁹ Although Heidegger does not himself formulate any criticism of von Uexküll along these lines in 1929 (and at that stage was only on the verge of formulating such a criticism of elements of his own work), von Uexküll does himself stand within a Kantian or better, neo-Kantian, frame of thinking of the sort that Heidegger came increasingly to view as increasingly problematic because of its subjectivist tendencies.

In this latter respect, while one can certainly view von Uexküll's concept of the organism in its world as a major development towards a more integrated conception of the relation between organism and environment, it nevertheless stands in clear distinction from the more fully 'ecological' conception of the relation between mortals and their world that appears in later Heidegger, and may even be viewed as already standing somewhat apart from early Heidegger's conception of being-in-the-world. Indeed, for all that Heidegger comes to regard *Being and Time* as hampered by certain Kantian elements, it should be quite clear that part of his intention in thinking of *Dasein* as 'being-in-the-world' is to avoid any idea of the world either as standing apart from *Dasein* (as some pre-given realm of 'objectivity') or as being constituted or constructed by *Dasein* (as a function of a pre-given 'subjectivity'). Von Uexküll's account of the animal in its environment, however, stands in a significant contrast here, since it gives priority to the animal as determinative of its world, treating each such world as a self-enclosed domain that is strictly speaking inaccessible from outside, and so von Uexküll's account remains essentially subjectivist or phenomenalist.

Harrington draws explicit attention to the subjectivist character of von Uexküll's work, citing von Uexküll's account of his sudden recognition, on seeing a beech tree in the Heidelberg woods, that 'this is not a beech tree, but rather my beech tree, something that I, with my sensations, have

¹⁸ 'The Origin of the Work of Art', in *Off the Beaten Track* (English translation of *Holzwege*), trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Barnes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.55.

¹⁹ *Contributions to Philosophy*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p.208; see also the comments in 'European Nihilism', in *Nietzsche*, trans. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979-87), Vol IV (*Nihilism*), p.141.

constructed in all its details. Everything [about the beech] that I see, hear, smell or feel are not qualities that exclusively belong to the beech, but rather are characteristics of my sense organs that I project outside of myself²⁰ The same subjectivism is also clearly evident in von Uexküll's published work – for instance, in his 1934 book, *A Stroll Through the Worlds of Animals and Men*, von Uexküll invites us to:

...first blow, in fancy, a soap bubble around each creature to represent its own world, filled with the perceptions which it alone knows. When we ourselves then step into one of these bubbles, the familiar meadow is transformed. Many of its colourful features disappear, others no longer belong together but appear in new relationships. A new world comes into being. Through the bubble we see the world of the burrowing worm, of the butterfly, of the field-mouse; the world as it appears to the animals themselves, not as it appears to us. This we may call the phenomenal world or the self-world of the animal.²¹

Each world, according to von Uexküll, is thus a function of the organism's own nature, and so each world is determined biologically, one might say, rather than geographically. Indeed, that this should be so is an important element that undoubtedly fed into von Uexküll's racism and anti-Semitism: different races form the world in different ways, and the world of the Jew is therefore a different world from the world of the Nordic Aryan. Yet it is not merely the idea of a connection between the organism and its space, between the human being and its place, that is at issue here, but the exact nature of that connection. The emphasis in von Uexküll, and in many racial theorists from the same period,²² on the determining role of the organism in its species nature – which, in the case of human beings, also means in its racial nature – stands in sharp contrast to those positions that see the organism as determined by its environment,

²⁰ Quoted by Harrington, from Uexküll's unpublished autobiographical notes, in *Reenchanting Science*, p.41.

²¹ 'A Stroll Through the Worlds of Animals and Men', in Claire H. Schiller (ed.), *Instinctive Behavior: The Development of a Modern Concept* (New York: International Universities Press, 1957)p.5.

²² Thus Ludwig Clauss writes in *Die nordische Seele: Eine Einführung in die Rassenseelenkunde* (*The Nordic Soul: An Introduction to Racial Psychology*), that "The manner in which the soul reaches out into its world fashions the geographical area of this world into a 'landscape'. A landscape is not something that the soul alights upon, as it were, something ready-made. Rather it is something that it fashions by virtue of its species-determined way of viewing its environment" – Clauss, *Die nordische Seele: Eine Einführung in die Rassenseelenkunde* (Munich: J.F. Lehmanns Verlag, 1932), p.19.

or with positions that see organism and environment as mutually determining or interdependent.

IV.

It has been common to assimilate racist thinking of the sort exemplified in Uexküll, with its emphasis on the difference between the racial types associated with different regions or 'spaces' to Ratzelian geographic 'determinism'. In fact, Ratzel stands quite apart from writers such as von Uexküll, and other racial theorists in general, simply on the basis of his very different understanding of the nature of the connection at issue here. It is indeed as an *environmental* or *geographic* determinist – one who puts the emphasis on the human as determined by the environment or geography – that Ratzel has been most commonly read, if not entirely accurately, within English-speaking circles; and it is notable that Ratzel also placed himself in clear opposition to the racist doctrines that were common in the latter half of the nineteenth century. He thus writes that 'The task of ethnography is ...to indicate, not in the first instances the distinctions, but the points of transition, and the intimate affinities which exist; for mankind is one though very variously cultured'.²³ Ratzel's notion of *Lebensraum*, living space, was an expression of his commitment to the idea that the forms of human organisation were always bound to their own geographic space, and could not be understood in separation from that space. As Robert Dickinson writes:

Ratzel...thought of the anthropogeographic unit as an areal complex whose spatial connections were needed for the functioning and organisation of a particular kind of human group, be it the village, town or state. The concept of lebensraum deals with the relations between human society as a spatial (geographic) organisation and its physical setting. Community area, trade area, milk-shed and labour-shed, historical province, commercial entity, the web of trade between neighbouring industrial areas across state boundaries – these area all subsequent variations of the concept of the 'living area'.²⁴

Although Ratzel believed that the development of states would imply an increase in the state's *Lebensraum*, he did not take the idea of

²³ Ratzel, *History of Mankind*, trans. A. J. Butler from 2nd German edn., 3 vols (London: Macmillan, 1896-8), p.4.

²⁴ Robert E. Dickinson, *The Makers of Modern Geography* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), 71.

Lebensraum as providing any justification of territorial expansion as such. It was the later deployment of the term within the ‘geopolitics’ of Rudolf Kjellen and Karl Haushofer (who was himself keen to assimilate Ratzel to his own camp) that led to its instrumentalist use within Nazi ideology. Moreover, Ratzel’s opposition to racialist theory can be seen, in fact, as a direct consequence of his prioritisation of environment and geographic space – although he also held, quite independently, it seems, that ethnic mixing itself contributed to the vigour of a society (a view that he may have developed during his early experiences in the ‘new’ societies of Mexico and the United States).

Ratzel’s emphasis on the importance of geographic space in social, cultural and ethnographic analysis can be seen as an important precursor to more recent ideas, not least those of writers such as Deleuze and Guattari, as well as Foucault, concerning the spatialized character of social, economic and cultural formations. Within French geographic thought, Ratzel was especially influential, and the work of the founder of French ‘regionalism’, Paul Vidal de la Blanche, can be seen to arise directly out of Ratzel’s geographical approach to human history and ethnography, and as a continuation of the Ratzelian idea of ‘human geography’ or anthropogeography. Like Ratzel, Vidal de la Blanche also rejects biological determinism, but whereas Ratzel emphasises the role of the physical environment in human history and culture, Vidal de la Blanche takes a more interactive approach. The regional geography that he initiated was based on the study of the interplay between the cultural and the environmental, but the place or region was primarily to be defined in cultural terms – in terms of the way the environment was shaped by human interaction – rather than as determined by natural topographic features alone. The physical environment is seen as opening a range of possibilities for human interaction rather than as determining that interaction – hence Vidal de la Blanche’s commitment to a geographical ‘possibilism’ rather than ‘determinism’. Interestingly, Henri Lefebvre was strongly influenced by Vidal de la Blanche, and his early work on the Pyrenees can itself be seen as containing important elements of Vidalian geographic practice.²⁵

In both Ratzel and Vidal de la Blanche, the emphasis on a conception on geographic space is not only crucial to the theoretical positions they advance, as well as to their significance within the history of geography, but also to the differentiation of their thought from that of von Uexküll and

²⁵ See J. Nicholas Entrikin and Vincent Berdoulay, ‘The Pyrenees as Place: Lefebvre as guide’, *Progress in Geography* 29 (2002), p.143

others like him. It also marks, of course, a key point of differentiation from Nazi ideology, and, in this respect, Heidegger must also be positioned alongside Ratzel and Vidal de la Blanche. Moreover, it is not just the emphasis on the role of the geographic (although what is meant by that will also require some further examination) as opposed to the biologicistic that is at issue here. What characterises the work of von Uexküll, as well as Nazi racial theorists, is the tendency to understand the nature of the animal or human 'world' as based in certain general forms of species-nature, 'racial stock' or racialised 'soul'. Such a tendency is already one that diminishes the significance of geographic space or place – it is the *general type* that is important in such thinking, in contrast to which the thinking that is oriented toward place typically gives emphasis to the regional and the local.

This latter issue turns out to be a crucial point of difference when one looks to the way Nazi ideology is related to the German '*Heimat*' tradition. The idea of '*Heimat*' – a term usually translated as 'Homeland' (though the translation does not capture the richness of the original German) – is connected with ideas of one's place of origin, the place in which one belongs, not only in the sense of the region from which one comes, and in which one may still dwell, but also in the sense of one's childhood home. In its academic form, the focus on *Heimat* and *Heimatskunde*, was part of the same orientation towards an understanding of human life and culture as it stood in relation to space, and so to region and landscape, as is evident in Ratzel and Vidal de la Blanche. Thus Ratzel's *Deutschland: Einführung in die Heimatskunde*,²⁶ which was a standard text in German schools in the early part of the twentieth century, essentially consisted in a regional ethnography of Germany. Elements of the *Heimat* tradition were themselves appropriated by the Nazis appearing in Nazi propaganda and rhetoric as well as in work of racial psychologists such as Clauss – elements of local and regional tradition and culture could be seen as a reflection of the racial stock associated with that locale or region. Yet the emphasis here is not on the local and regional as such, but rather on the local and the regional as they stand in relation to the racial and the national. The totalising politics of the Nazi state was not about strengthening local or regional associations and culture, but rather about the creation of a political apparatus geared to the satisfaction of a set of universalising desires and ambitions.²⁷ It is thus that Nazism, for all its romantic anti-modernist elements, can also be seen as the instantiation of

²⁶ F. Ratzel, *Deutschland. Einführung in die Heimatskunde* (Leipzig: Grunow 1898).

²⁷ See Heidegger's *Topology*, pp.25-6.

something essentially modern – the attempt to reshape the world in a certain ideal image, to impose one's will upon that world, and to make it one's own. Here the sort of 'subjectivism' that one finds in von Uexküll appears to have developed into a determinate political form – the geographical becoming itself subject to the racial and the psychological.

This is not to say, of course, that the *Heimat* tradition, or other traditions and discourses that draw on notions of place and belonging, are always innocent of problematic tendencies or elements. The point is rather that such spatially or 'geographically' oriented traditions and discourses should not themselves be construed as inevitably tied to certain particular political tendencies or movements. Thus one may well find notions of place and belonging appearing in association with reactionary and exclusionary forms of politics – one need only look to events in present-day Palestine, in the Balkans, or even on Sydney's Cronulla Beach – but one also finds such notions being drawn on in conjunction with politics of a more progressive and inclusive character. Much current discussion of sustainability, for instance, is based around the attachment and connection between individuals, communities and the local or regional environments in which they live; while indigenous politics, especially in Australia, but elsewhere in the world also, gives a central role to the need to recognise indigenous connection to country, and, sometimes, to find ways of articulating or re-articulating modes of connection that might be relevant to the non-indigenous.²⁸ That the spatial and 'geographic' concepts that are at issue here are indeed so ubiquitous, irrespective of the particularities of political commitment, is itself indicative of the centrality and significance of those concepts.

V.

It is often claimed that to take human being as standing in an important relation to place or geographic space is already to presuppose a homogeneity of culture and identity in relation to that place, as well as to exclude others from it. This the core of the argument that is often used to demonstrate the supposed politically dangerous character of 'geographic'

²⁸ For an exploration of some of the complex network of issues that is at stake here, with particular, but not exclusive, reference to the Australian context, see Linn Miller, *Being and Belonging* (PhD dissertation, University of Tasmania, 2006), and also, though from a somewhat different perspective, Peter Read, *Belonging: Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

thinking (an argument that appears, for instance, in Levinas,²⁹ but is also assumed, apparently as self-evident, in many other writers). Yet this claim is usually only advanced in specific instances – it is frequently directed against Heidegger, for instance, but is seldom deployed against indigenous forms of thought that similarly prioritise place or geographic space – and typically depends on already construing ‘geographic’ thinking in a way that assumes its problematic political associations rather than exhibiting or proving them (and seldom delves too deeply into the actual historical and philosophical details that might be relevant here). What the work of thinkers such as Heidegger, as well as of Ratzel and Vidal de la Blanche, and the broader tradition of humanistic geography, brings to prominence is the very question of place or geographic space as such.

In Heidegger’s work the questionability of place is already evident, if indirectly, in *Being and Time*, in terms of the problematic status accorded to spatiality within the structure of ‘being-in-the-world’ at the same time as ideas and images of space and place constantly emerge as central elements within the overall analysis (in, for instance, the very idea of ‘being-in’, as well as the notion of the ‘Da’, the ‘There’, of Dasein).³⁰ Much of Heidegger’s later thinking can be seen as itself a sustained attempt to elucidate the nature of place or *topos*, hence Heidegger’s own characterisation of his thinking as a ‘topology’ of being.³¹ In his thinking of place, Heidegger can also be seen as urging a re-thinking of space. Thus, in the very late essay ‘Art and Space’ (written in conjunction with the Basque sculptor Eduardo Chillida whose contributions was in the form of series of lithographs), Heidegger urges an understanding of space, in terms, not of the ‘physical-technological’ space of ‘Galileo and Newton’, but rather of ‘clearing away’ (*Räumen*) – the sort of ‘clearing away’ that opens up a region for settlement and dwelling.³² While space is that which Galileo and Newton theorise, it is also, that clearing away and opening up,

²⁹ See Levinas, ‘Heidegger, Gagarin and Us’, in *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*, trans. Seán Hand (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), pp. 231–34 – in this essay Levinas writes, for instance, that ‘One’s implementation in a landscape, one’s attachment to Place, without which the universe would become insignificant and would scarcely exist, is the very splitting of humanity into natives and strangers. And in this light technology is less dangerous than the spirits of Place.’

³⁰ See *Heidegger’s Topology*, chapter three.

³¹ See ‘Seminar in Le Thor 1969’, *Four Seminars*, trans. Andrew Mitchell and François Raffoul (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), pp.41 & 47.

³² Martin Heidegger, ‘Art and Space’, trans. Charles Seibert, *Man and World* 1 (1973), p.4; from ‘*Die Kunst und der Raum*’ (St Gallen: Erker Verlag, 1969), p.6.

that ‘spacing’, that allows for the possibility of appearance, and that occurs always and only in relation to specific places. It is this sense of space, itself closely associated to geographic rather than purely geometric space (to use Paddock’s contrast) that turns out to be so important in the later Heidegger’s meditative thinking on the happening of the Fourfold, and with it the ‘aesthetics’ (we might also say, with an eye to the place of *ethos* here, the ‘ethics’) of dwelling.

The space and place at issue here is not, however, a space or place already determined by, nor simply determinative of, human being. Instead, it is that within and on the basis of which human being is itself brought to articulate and meaningful appearance. Thus, in the account of the Fourfold in essays such as ‘Bauen Wohnen Denken’, place is that which is established in and through the gathering together of earth and sky, gods and mortals, in the thing, while it is also that within and on the basis of which the thing itself appears, as it is also that which allows the appearance of the elements of the Fourfold as such – the sky is that very sky which arches above us, and the earth that which lies beneath our feet, here, now, in this place, and it is also here, in ‘this’ place, and only here, that the encounter between mortals, and between mortals and gods (whether in their absence or presence) also occurs. Mortals thus play a role in the coming to be of places, although not exclusively so, and places themselves play a role in the appearing of mortals. On this basis, place might be viewed in terms somewhat reminiscent of Plato’s conception of the *chora* (a term sometimes equated with space, but also with place) as the very matrix of becoming – although unlike Plato’s *chora*,³³ which remains always indeterminate, place itself comes to appearance, and so appears in a singular and determinate form (as just ‘this’ place) in the happening, the *Ereignis*, of place that is also the happening of the Fourfold.³⁴

Although there has sometimes been a tendency within humanistic geography to treat place in ways that sometimes assume a certain ‘subjectivism’ in relation to place – place is thus viewed as a function of human experience (a tendency that is sometimes evident in, for instance, Tuan’s work³⁵) – there is nevertheless a complexity and indeterminacy that has also merged as a key element in the geographical understanding of place as that has developed over the last century or so, particularly in the line that derives from Ratzel and Vidal de la Blanche, and that

³³ See Plato, *Timaeus*, 48E-52D

³⁴ For a more detailed account see *Heidegger’s Topology*, chapter six.

³⁵ See my brief comment on this in *Place and Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.30 n.33.

encompasses such as Tuan, Relph and others. J. Nicholas Entrikin, for instance, emphasises the ‘betweenness of place’³⁶ (an emphasis also present in Heidegger), while Doreen Massey, at the same time as she has been critical of a certain rather caricatured version of the Heideggerian position,³⁷ has nevertheless also argued for the centrality of a conception of place articulated through notions of process, interconnection, and diversity.³⁸ Places are thus understood as dynamic structures that allow for the interaction between the human and the environmental, and as themselves determined in and through such interacting, at the same time as they also participate in it. Such a view is far removed from the conception of place as determined by the racial and the biological that is to be found in the work of such as von Uexküll and Clauss, and to which, to reinforce the point, Heidegger must be seen as opposed. The rise of place as a central concept in contemporary thinking within cultural and human geography – a rise to which Heidegger has himself contributed – should thus be seen as a function, not of the increasing dominance of a reactionary and deterministic conservatism, but quite the opposite – as the opening up of place as the proper site for the questioning of ourselves, our world, and our locatedness within it.

In the *Parmenides* lectures from the early 1940s, Heidegger comments on the Greek *topos* as follows:

Τόπος is the Greek for ‘place,’ although not as mere position in a manifold of points, everywhere homogeneous. The essence of the place consists in holding gathered, as the present ‘where,’ the circumference of what is in its nexus, what pertains to it and is ‘of’ it, of the place. The place is the originally gathering holding of what belongs together and is thus for the most part a manifold of places reciprocally related by belonging together, which we call a settlement or a district [*Ortschaft*]. In the extended domain of the district there are thus roads, passages, and paths. A δαίμονιοζ Τόπος [*daimonios topos*] is an ‘uncanny district.’ That now means: a ‘where’ in whose squares and alleys the uncanny shines explicitly and the essence of Being comes to presence in an eminent

³⁶ See Entrikin, *The Betweenness of Place: Towards a Geography of Modernity* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990).

³⁷ See Doreen Massey, ‘Power-geometry and a progressive sense of place’, in Jon Bird, Barry Curtis, Tim Putnam, George Robertson and Lisa Tickner (eds), *Mapping the Futures* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp.64-67.

³⁸ See Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), especially pp. 117-72.

sense.³⁹

That place should appear in this way as ‘uncanny’ ought to indicate how far Heidegger is from viewing place as merely some ‘given’ that is already secure and determined. Indeed, in the ‘Letter on “Humanism”’ from 1947, commenting on one of his earlier essays, Heidegger writes:

In the lecture on Hölderlin’s elegy ‘Homecoming’ (1943) [the]... nearness ‘of’ being, which is the Da of Dasein ...is called the ‘homeland.’ The word is thought here in an essential sense, not patriotically or nationalistically, but in terms of the history of being. The essence of the homeland, however, is also mentioned with the intention of thinking the homelessness of contemporary human beings from the essence of being’s history....Homelessness...consists in the abandonment of beings by being. Homelessness is the symptom of oblivion of being.⁴⁰

The ‘Homeland’ (*Heimat*) that is invoked here is not some place of safety and familiarity. It is the same place that Heidegger refers to in the passage from the *Parmenides* lectures as that ‘uncanny district’ in which ‘the essence of Being comes to presence’. And why should it be uncanny? – because the coming to presence of being is not a matter of the coming to be of some being, but is rather the coming to presence of the *questionability* that belongs to being essentially. In Heidegger, therefore, homecoming names the turning back to the questionability of being, which is also the questionability of our own being. It is this return to questionability that is also at issue in the turn to place, and it is what marks Heidegger’s ‘geography’ from the deterministic subjectivism and biologism of such as von Uexküll.

VI.

Agamben’s juxtaposition of Heidegger with von Uexküll and, perhaps more importantly, Ratzel and Vidal de la Blanche, turns out to be significant for reasons rather different from those that Agamben himself may have had in mind. It not only directs attention to the complexities of the intellectual connections that we may trace out between Heidegger and

³⁹ Heidegger, *Parmenides*, trans. André Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), p.117.

⁴⁰ ‘Letter on “Humanism”’, *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp.257-58. See, once again, James Phillips’ discussion of this idea of the ‘uncanny homeland’ (*unheimliche Heimat*) in *Heidegger’s Volk*, pp.169-217.

other thinkers, but also to the way in which Heidegger's thought connects up with a number of important elements in geographic thought that centre on notions of 'geographic' space, and to the complexities that surround those notions. One of the core questions that emerges here is not merely whether the idea of a connection between human being and place is itself politically problematic, but just how that connection should be understood. Is it a matter, as von Uexküll, Chamberlain or Clauss would have it, that place and space, and so also world, are themselves functions of the biological, of a racially determined human nature, of a certain sort of soul? Or is it rather that the world is itself worked out in and through place, and that place provides the proper and only frame within which the animal and the human can come to appearance, within which they appear as animal and as human?

This latter question can be seen to bring us back within the ambit of Agamben's original comments, since they return us to the question of the relation between place and world, as well as the relation between the human and the animal, but they place the issue of place, and of space, at the centre of that discussion, whereas it remains relatively peripheral in Agamben. There is, in fact, good reason to suppose that we cannot begin to understand the being of the human or of the animal unless we can first address the relation between world and place. In that case, and contrary to the position developed by Agamben, the open does not name that which stands between the animal and the human, but rather the open, but bounded, space, the place, within which an encounter between the human and the animal is itself possible. Agamben has his own reasons, of course, for wanting to shift the concept of the open in the way that he does, but in so doing he shifts the discussion away from the very question that he also opens up through the associations that he suggests between Heidegger, von Uexküll, and the geographical tradition that includes Ratzel and Vidal de la Blanche.

HEEDING HEIDEGGER'S WAY: QUESTIONS OF THE WORK OF ART¹

ELIZABETH M. GRIERSON

The work of art, an event and a disclosure

I was walking along a path with two friends
the sun was setting
I felt a breath of melancholy.
Suddenly the sky turned blood-red
I stopped and leant against the railing,
Deathly tired
Looking out across flaming clouds that hung
Like blood and a sword over the
Deep blue fjord and town.
My friends walked on — I stood there
Trembling with anxiety
And I felt a great infinite scream
Pass through nature.
(Edvard Munch, in Wood, 1992: 96)

Edvard Munch and *The Scream* (1893) has just hit the headlines. “Outrage at ease of Scream theft” announces yet another art heist from a public museum. “No alarms rang as the robbers threatened a security guard with a gun, forced people to lie down, and removed the painting, worth about \$80 million” (*The New Zealand Herald*, 24 August, 2004: B1). In the report the work of art is described as “one of art’s best-known treasures”; “one of the most instantly recognisable images in art”; one of “four versions of *The Scream* which was part of a series called *The Frieze of Life*”; a “howling figure”; and “the world’s most famous and most frequently reproduced painting”. Each of these statements acts as a mode

¹ This essay has been developed from an earlier version that appeared in *ACCESS: Critical Perspectives on Communication, Cultural & Policy Studies*, 22 (1 & 2), 2003.

of representation serving to categorise the object or artwork. What is interesting in this account is that the work of art as we know it, *as art*, is not the major interest of the report. In six columns of reportage there are only a few scattered references to "the art" itself (but what is "the art"? we might ask.). The main attention is devoted to the event as an object of examination and representation, which includes an account of the poor security of the gallery and humiliation of the Oslo gallery custodians ("the ease with which they took [the painting] was embarrassing in the extreme"); the language spoken by the thieves ("they spoke Norwegian") during the robbery; and the location of getaway car and smashed frame (seen as "identification clues"); some quantifiable information such as the painting's worth ("about \$80 million") and comparative visitor statistics at the Munch Museum ("more than four million visitors"). In addition to the factual periphery, and in the interests of activating the popular imagination, there was a report of the curious mix of personnel involved in solving the mystery of a previous theft of *The Scream* (National Gallery, February, 1994), named as "a Scotland Yard detective, a top football player [in] a sting operation as audacious as the original theft". Such equivalences brought sting, theft, and audacity into correspondence with each other to comprise the primary object of interest for the public: this was an audacious theft operation.

What these phrases and references represent to us is a world of "art" that has become a world of something else that is not art, and yet ... this starts to be perplexing. If it is not "art", but "event", then what is the event-world that this entity called art inhabits and gathers around itself? From what has been written of the robbery, perhaps it is true that "we get the picture". But in "The Age of the World Picture" Heidegger asks (Heidegger, 1977b: 129), "What does 'picture' mean?" He then answers his own question with, "'Picture' here does not mean some imitation, but rather what sounds forth in the colloquial expression – 'We get the picture' (literally, we are in the picture) concerning something". Heidegger's thinking on 'world picture' reveals that "representation" is at work here – "what is, is set before us, is represented to us", but also "what is stands before us – in all that belongs to it and all that stands together in it – as a system". So the circles are widening here, to include systems in the world, events of thought and perception. We, as the perceivers, are brought into the moment of perception as we "get the picture". It "throbs with being acquainted with something, with being equipped and prepared for it". So we are in a world of preparedness as we "set in place" the "picture" that we say we get.

Reading further, we find that Heidegger is taking us beyond “representation” as “the character of subjective perception” (Heidegger, 1977b: 131) to see “the one who – in company with itself – gathered towards presencing, by that which opens itself” and he takes the question of language back to the Ancient Greeks with, “in order to fulfill his essence, Greek man must gather (*legein*) and save (*sōzein*), catch up and preserve, what opens itself in its openness and he must remain exposed (*alētheuein*) to all its sundering confusions” (ibid.). If the “picture” that we get in the event of an art heist is *represented* to us via the language of the news media, then its “object-being” may be separating us from a gathering “towards presencing” in the Heideggerian sense of Being.

This discussion has started with a work of art, an event and a disclosure. The way we are accessing these three things is by writing through a discourse event. In the picture of this discussion there is a work of art, namely *The Scream*, variously described in a range of genres as modes of representation. In a moment’s event (23/8/04), *The Scream* has been represented in a way that befits a technological age of heightened informational exchange in the twenty-first century, in a named location (Oslo, Norway), as an object in a world of locatable objects, categories and events. Thus it is represented as a thing with significant capital value that should have been well-secured and was not; a thing that has caused embarrassment to others who were looking after it; a thing that re-inscribes public interest and talk; a thing that signifies the general interest people have in technologically inscribed things and events in the world. This is the picture that we get through the reportage – *The Scream* as a rationally (dis)ordered object, a technologised event through which we are juxtaposed in a rationally ordered relationship through the process of linguistic and visual representation of the work of art as an object in a world of objects.

Public talk, language and being

The Scream as a “work” of art, an aesthetic object, a painting, one hundred years old, has been presented in different ways in discourses of art history, and publicly, by diverse people in diverse settings, as a metaphor of modern life. “We get the picture”, they say, and generally seem to agree. This discussion will address the question of modern life and its apparent destitution shortly as it works its way back towards the work of art. However, first let us consider this: what is the implication of “publicly” in the way Munch’s work of art may be known? Heidegger’s *Ontology–The*

Hermeneutics of Facticity (Heidegger, 1999a) may throw some light on this question.

In his Lecture Course from the Summer Semester of 1923 at Marburg University, where he taught from 1923 to 1928, Heidegger (Heidegger, 1999a: 24-27) addresses the question of "*Facticity as the being-there of Dasein in the awhileness of temporal particularity. The 'today'*" (Translator's footnote #1: "H's heading: 'Hermeneutics of the Situation'") (Heidegger, 1999a: 24). In this section Heidegger (Heidegger, 1999a: 25) draws the reader into a consideration of the way that "[t]he being-there of Dasein has its *open space of publicness* and its ways of seeing there. It moves (a basic phenomenon) around a definite mode of discourse about itself: *talk* (technical term)" (Heidegger's emphasis).

How is it that *The Scream* can be known in the sorts of terms that are publicly agreed (by "everyone")? Heidegger (Heidegger, 1999a: 26) speaks of "publicness" in relation to being:

publicness is the mode of being of the '*every-one*': everyone says that..., everyone has heard that..., everyone tells it like..., everyone thinks that..., everyone expects that..., everyone is in favor of. [...] The talk in circulation belongs to no one, no one takes responsibility for it, everyone has said it.

Thus "publicness" is not an "out-there" objective situation when *Dasein* as a "temporal particularity" (Heidegger, 1999a: 24) is considered. Rather "publicness" is a particular "mode of being"; and in that "mode of being" *Dasein* is "being-interpreted in the today" (Heidegger, 1999a: 26). Heidegger is drawing us into our own present:

the awhileness of temporal particularity is the *today* – in each case whiling, tarrying for a while, in the present, in each case our own present. (Dasein as historical Dasein, its present. Being 'in' the world, being lived 'from out of' the world – the present – everyday.) (Heidegger, 1999a: 24).

It may seem that this discussion is getting sidetracked into an interpretive analysis of Heidegger's *Dasein* (there/here-Being; to be there; being there) in its present-ness, rather than talking about the work of art in question, or the question of modern life and its apparent destitution. However, it is attempting to show Heidegger's fundamental and enduring concerns for his philosophy of Being and his profound questioning of the forgetting of the question of Being in Western metaphysics. Such forgetting is an inscribed practice via philosophy's post-Cartesian emphasis on epistemology and the Western world's constructions of causality. For Heidegger, any questions to do with truth, reality and being are already

infused with deeply entrenched ontological pre-suppositions in Western thought, to which he returns again and again as fundamental flaws of transcendental idealism, technological determinism, and teleological thinking/being. In productionist metaphysics the resources of thinking and things (technological) become as “standing-reserve” for Heidegger (Heidegger, 1977a: 17) to be stored-up for later possible use. But even as we store-up, the possible becomes “standing-reserve” for later capitalisation. Thus the world and its entities (even entities of thought) are objectified for our use and separated repetitively from the time of being. Thus the Being is represented as the Being-of-knowledge, the Being-of-belief, the *a priori* Being-of-presence. Heidegger turns towards the *Being of the being in time*, in the temporality of our existence, and speaks through a new language of possibility of the b/Being that has not been thought prior to the act of thinking.

Here is a critical spirit; a way of working towards some sort of disclosure through the very act of language with its paradoxes and poetics, as a “gathering” of the world, a “clearing of being”, a “revealing” of the world in relation to finality, one’s death and the finitude of being-in-the-world. In his writing, Heidegger seeks language that displaces entrenched propositions and philosophical assumptions, “invent[ing] his own technical terminology” (Roberts, 1966: 147), which many readers find difficult if not alienating. However, working through this language with its particularities and *poiësis* can be an illuminating experience. As Otto Pöggeler put it (1963), “Heidegger’s thought must be understood *as a way*. [...] Heidegger has always understood his thinking as going along a way [...] into the neighbourhood of Being” (cited in Krell, 1999: 31).

The discussions from the Marburg seminar (1923) are pre-*Being and Time* (Heidegger’s *magnum opus* of 1927) and they reveal how his thinking on the central question of “being” (*Sein*) has been, since the Greeks, through Medieval scholasticism, and the Western Enlightenment, ill-matched with the question of time. By asking questions of the being of Being, Heidegger’s engagement with ontology is a “fundamental ontology” that seeks to get underneath the questions posed by specific ontologies of history or nature. Heidegger’s *Dasein* is not of biological origin, nor of consciousness; not contingent nor conditional; not pre-determined in essence nor rationality; not confined to time or place; but is in and of time and place, a disclosing thing in the world – “from the outset a question concerning *truth*, understood not as the correspondence of propositions to states of affairs, but as disclosure, unconcealment, and what Heidegger later called ‘the clearing of being’, *die Lichtung des Seins*” (Urmson and Rée, 1995: 129).

Hermeneutical explication in the today

In his early lectures (1923), Heidegger (Heidegger, 1999a: 25) took us further into the question of *talk* as a statement of “publicness” and the need for us to be “wide-awake” for and in “today”, as he draws attention to the attempts “to get a grasp of the today hermeneutically through wide-ranging and longwinded discussions which provide entertaining *portraits* of the so-called most interesting tendencies of the present”, which he identifies as “*hermeneutical explication*”, but one that “must constantly struggle against the possibility of getting sidetracked...” (ibid.). The “ontology of Dasein must be *hermeneutical*, that is, aware of its own historical formation and indefatigably attentive to the problem of interpretation” (Krell, 1999: 21).

The early Heidegger, while largely influenced by Husserl's phenomenology and Dilthey's hermeneutical investigations, questions the limits of transcendental phenomenology as a way of understanding being-in-the-world. He questions philosophy's reliance upon “traditional epistemologies and metaphysical systems that appeared to have forgotten the salient features of human being as being-in-the-world” (Urmson and Rée, 1995: 129). In this forgetting, philosophy has forgotten the question of being in the being who questions. His approach towards hermeneutics, which is engaged in a deeper sense in *Being and Time* (1927), is demanding a reappraisal of *hermēneuein* (to interpret), and *hermēneutike* (*technē*) (the art of interpretation), by interpreting the being who interprets texts in the world, including, and by example (in his later writings), works of art as *the work* of art.

If art *as work* has the potential to reveal a strife of being-in-the-world, then there must be a calling up, an unfolding or revealing of the world beyond what might simply be the *interpretive public talk* about the work as object/event. However, in the institutionalisation of the art as aesthetic object, “hermeneutical explication” has become a dominating facet of “art world” representations with their dependence on interpretation of aesthetic and cultural values.

This is a fundamental characteristic of disciplinary and public talk that underlies the interpretive disciplines that have become institutionalised and publicly normalised, in which the work of art is positioned and from which institutional and public practices feed. For example, Art History, Media Studies, Cultural Studies, and even the Creative Arts (visual arts, dance, music, performance) have largely depended upon such interpretive qualities of discourse for their legitimating technologies of method, manner and meaning in the making, positioning and evaluating of the

work of art as a representational practice or product. This is not to say that representation *per se* has not been thoroughly deconstructed and reconsidered through post-Heideggerian, poststructuralist engagements on the dominance of “what is seen”. Yet it is fair to say that there appears to be, in education as in the art world, a continuing re-inscription of interpretive frameworks by which self-validating scaffolds of the disciplines are built, and by which the work of education, and the work of art, might be positioned in a metaphysically inscribed world of categories. In this sense, in our institutional practices with their pragmatism and accountabilities, we are conditioned to respond, no doubt neutrally, to a productionist demand. The command is determined by, and determines, the need to labour towards order, to sort out the world technologically and work (with)in it as a rationally ordered Being coursing teleologically through history towards a “better” future. Are we, in fact, *Enframed* by well-intentioned and self-perpetuating typologies and truths around which institutional discourses construct (manufacture) a series of propositions that are accountable to logic? Is this Heidegger’s identifiable “danger” in the technologised constructions of thought, knowledge and truth?

Rather than assuming correspondence with a series of logical propositions, Heidegger works through questions concerning *technē* and *poiēsis* as a way of revealing the “danger” and a possible “saving-power” of technology. Heidegger’s concern for technology as an *Enframing* and ordering forth of causality, as discussed in “The Question Concerning Technology” (Heidegger, 1977a: 12), proposes a way of thinking through the essence of technology, which Heidegger says is “by no means anything technological” (Heidegger, 1977a: 4). “So long as we represent technology as an instrument, we remain held fast in the will to master it. We press on past the essence of technology” (Heidegger, 1977a: 32). In seeking its “essence”, Heidegger turns to the German poet Hölderlin: “*But where danger is, grows/ the saving power also*” (Heidegger, 1977a: 28 & 34). And from Hölderlin he shows that “the essence of technology must harbor in itself the growth of the saving power”; then almost immediately asks, “In what respect does the saving power grow there also where the danger is?”; and then, “we have said that in technology’s essence roots and thrives the saving power” (Heidegger, 1977a: 28-29). Heidegger’s way of working through these questions on the essence of technology is a way of movement, a way of disclosure through the temporality of process; and in that process there lies his work of revealing. “Technology is a way of revealing”, he writes; and, “It is as revealing, and not as manufacturing, that *technē* is a bringing-forth” (Heidegger, 1977a: 13).

Accepting the task at hand is to recognise the “bringing forth” in the work of art and education, we might then ask of Heidegger, how might such “bringing forth” be brought forth? And Heidegger might reply, “Technology comes to presence ... in the realm where revealing and unconcealment take place, where *alētheia*, truth, happens” (Heidegger, 1977a: 13), and “the revealing that brings forth (*poiēsis*) is also a way that has the character of destining” (Heidegger, 1977a: 29). We might then ask, what of truth? Of truth, explains Heidegger (Heidegger, 1977a: 11-12), “[t]he Greeks have the word *alētheia* for revealing”, which was translated by the Romans to *veritas*, and in modern language, *truth*, usually understood as “the correctness of an idea”. And then we will see that throughout his writings Heidegger seeks to move “truth” further towards the Ancient Greek conception of “revealing”.

Dasein and interpretation

Letting beings be, which is an attuning, a bringing into accord, prevails throughout and anticipates all the open comportment that flourishes in it. (Heidegger, “On the Essence of Truth”, 1999b: 129).

If we seek a “bringing-forth” of truth in the world then we might return to Munch. He was walking across a bridge and at that moment in time “*the sky turned blood-red*”; he stood there “[t]rembling with anxiety”. His words, in his diaries of the 1890s, tremble with *poiēsis*. And these words are ultimately thrown out to the world to be interpreted and represented into something else, forms or objects to be made into meaningful metaphors of the *fin de siècle* of the nineteenth century.

How might *Dasein* be at work in the work of art (in the painting as in the words) as a way of opening or dismantling re-presentation and opening the space of disclosure to something other? In his lectures on the work of art (at Freiburg, Zurich and Frankfurt, 1935-36), later published (1950) as the full and richly written essay, “The Origin of the Work of Art”, Heidegger argues, as explained by David Krell in his introduction to the English translation (Heidegger, 1999c: 141), that “revelation belongs to every work of art: the work erects a world which in turn opens a space for man and things”. How might such a space be opened to the work of “revelation” as a “clearing of being”, in the work itself, we might ask? Krell then notes that perhaps the greatest challenge of “The Origin of the Work of Art” is “how through the work of art we are to envisage the creative strife of world and earth” (Heidegger, 1999c: 141). Heidegger is thus moving us beyond the work of art as a “standing-reserve” (Heidegger,

1977a: 15), as an object of aesthetic enquiry, interpretation or judgement, or a material object of interest primarily for its making as an event of *technē*. He is moving us beyond these modes of form and objecthood, which separate us as subject from them as object, to a way of relating, knowing and being in the world. He is moving us elsewhere, other than the mode of concealing the very *poiēsis* that may be entailed in the work of art, and turning us towards a “revealing which in the sense of *poiēsis*, lets what presences come forth into appearance” (Heidegger, 1977a: 27). Thus Heidegger is moving us towards *ergon* that “characterizes the manner of presencing [...] to presence-as-work (presence understood verbally) in the work of work-ness” (Heidegger, 1973: 5).

The Scream may compel us by its “creative strife”, as the moment of recognition of terror (that which presences) “comes forth into appearance”. Munch’s moment of terror comes forth during a walk at sunset on a trip to Ekebergsåsen. Is that the sort of *presencing* Heidegger speaks of, where the mask-like face of one solitary figure, with open mouth, hands clutched to side of head, opens “what presences” in and to the world?

If we turn to art historical discourses, we find that terms like “presencing” are not liberally scattered in the way this work of art has been interpreted or understood. More likely are we to find lineages and links back to past things or forward to future events – a schema of progressive thought in the relations of *Idea* and *Energeia*, *Whatness* and *Thatness* (Heidegger, 1973). For example, this death-mask of Munch’s may be traced epistemologically through textual inter-connections, such as those suggested by art historian Robert Rosenblum, in the influences of a Peruvian mummy at the *Musée de l’Homme* in Paris (see Bischoff, 1990: 53-55); and also to literary sources such as Dostoyevsky and philosophies of Kierkegaard, whose outlook brings impending natural disaster into a soul “so heavy that no thought can uplift it any more. Oppressiveness and anxiety are brooding over my inner being, sensing an earthquake to come” (cited in Bischoff, 1990: 54). And there is the possible forward link to Rainer Maria Rilke who, in 1920, refused to write on Oskar Kokoschka on the basis that “Munch’s lines already included this constructive power of terror – but there was infinitely more of Nature in him than in Kokoschka, and so he was always able to reconcile the opposites of preservation and destruction in purely spatial terms, to blunt their edge in an image or picture...” (cited in Bischoff, 1990: 54-55). However, from whence springs this language by which Munch’s work is represented? Could it be the framing echoes of the humanist art historian tracing the referential content of the work, seeking always to locate its place and position in

historical time as an intellectually stabilising gesture? What else, or other, might be at work in the “work-ness” of our present undertaking, and what else might be spoken by the other who speaks?

In the essay “The Origin of the Work of Art”, Heidegger speaks of Van Gogh’s painting of a pair of old, well-worn shoes². “But what is there to see here?” he asks. “Everyone knows what shoes consist of” (Heidegger, 1999c: 158). Thus in emphasising what is commonly known he is effectively problematising the given-ness of art as a visual field of representation that corresponds to some object or other “out-there” in the world. He is addressing the endless interpretations of content and form that art commentators are given to, that come under the umbrella of “representation” – locating through image and language the known objects or entities in the world of appearances. “Form and content are the most hackneyed concepts under which anything and everything may be subsumed”, iterates Heidegger (Heidegger, 1999c: 153); and then takes us further in our considerations by stating, “The work makes public something other than itself” (Heidegger, 1999c: 145). So, it is the “something other” in the work, or elsewhere, that we must be open to when confronted with art.

Midnight is never far away

Heidegger seeks to “discover the essence of the art that actually prevails in the work” (Heidegger, 1999c: 144) when he asks: “What happens here? What is at work?” This is a fundamental question for consideration by the educator in the disciplinary fields of art, be they visual or fine arts, media arts or music, dance or drama, written or oral, poetry or novel, design or new-media, histories or technologies. When the arts *per se* are encountered (made, considered, disseminated, engaged, performed or revealed) what happens, what prevails? Skills and technologies?

² Art historian Meyer Schapiro disputes Heidegger’s statement that the shoes painted by Van Gogh are indeed peasant shoes. Although the shoes play a central role in Heidegger’s arguments regarding the “equipmental being of the equipment” as dwelling in the time of being and belonging to the earth, Schapiro wrote to Heidegger in 1965 to point out that he (Heidegger) had overlooked Van Gogh’s own concerns for painting the shoes as a “sacred relic” of his own life. (See discussion in Berman, 1996). Clearly Schapiro approaches the shoes with the art historian’s search for historical accuracy and truth to the artist’s intentions and subjective presence, whereas Heidegger has allowed the shoes to enter the realms of his heuristic unfolding of a philosophical argument. Two different discourses are thus at work with the “peasant” shoes as the problematised signifier.

Manipulation of methods and media? Aesthetics and appreciation? Interpretations and judgements? Exhibitions and events? *Idea* and *Energeia*? What is being brought into proximity with what? What distanced? What processes or assumptions are at work here? Heidegger confronts the “pair of concepts, matter-form” (*hyle*, matter; *morphē*, form), when he says, “the distinction of matter and form is *the conceptual schema which is used, in the greatest variety of ways, quite generally for all art theory and aesthetics*” (Heidegger, 1999c: 153). Questioning the schema is crucial to Heidegger’s project. Where lie the historical separations, we ask; and Heidegger answers, “The metaphysics of the modern period rests on the form-matter structure” (Heidegger, 1999c: 156); and we see we are working through a dismantling of historically embedded prescriptions of thought-systems and ways of “knowing/being” in the world, as we work towards an opening space of *ergon*.

In “Modern Science, Metaphysics, and Mathematics” we read: “Every sort of thought [...] is always only the execution and consequence of a mode of historical Dasein, of the fundamental position taken toward Being and toward the way in which beings are manifest as such, i.e., toward truth.” (Heidegger, 1999d: 295-296). The historical modes whereby formal categories are constructed are so patently functional in the production and interpretation of art, as in the production of knowledge, and the production of corresponding understanding in education, work, and in the world at large. Reading through Heidegger, it soon becomes apparent that his project is re-thinking the division of matter and form in the dismantling of Western metaphysics; re-thinking the question of being and time, to overcome aesthetics and appreciation with their objectifying of the work of art, (for an analytical approach to aesthetics, see Dickie, 1997), to overturn the limiting of *technē* to technocratic, technological means-end thinking; and to question instrumentalist technology by re-thinking it in more human terms. Yet our dominant world-models of technology, institutional, public and educational practices, including the arts and education, have been founded and formed on such causal demands of work as labour, a progressive means-end relationship. The formulation of selves as subjects within these demands and their demanding ends is exacerbated via the new formulations of knowledge economies and knowledge societies, heavy with the politics of accountability in production and management – be it teaching or research, business or marketing, arts or engineering, science or health, or in the fundamentally social acts of working and living in neighbourhoods (societal groupings). Even the industries of care and hospitality, entertainment and media, sport and religion have been folded into this means-end instrumentalism in a

highly pragmatized worldview in which no one/thing/event/work is outside the defining *métier*. By these means we are enframed, as in Heidegger's enframing technologies (nothing technological). What is this "work" of living, of technology, of education, of public discourse, that we perform and by which we are shaped? How might we, and the work, come into some other relational mode of being in the temporality of our meeting?

If work "as a world" opens a space to something other than itself as an "object-being" to be represented, and according to Heidegger it does, then working towards an understanding of this process might be liberating in some way. In the shadow of technologized demands, institutional practices are disciplined by economic governance, frameworks, and newly devised necessities (always newly, for the future). The *Enframed* present inscribes new modes of "being creative", aligning art with industry in the category, "Creative Industries" as a productive category for future economies. Now these alignments correspond with new political truths by which the world will be known. In the means-end worldview of economic predictions, even time is brought sharply into teleological focus, pairing art with industry as a perfect correspondence of economic labour.

In such calculative thinking does the foot fit the slipper; and how long will the fit last? Is the technology of productionist thought the "danger" or "saving power"? Are we, as the everyman, in the words of Nietzsche (1874), "ringed around with frightful abysses, and every step he takes ought to make him ask: Wither? Whence? To what end?" (Breazeale, 1997: 35, cited in Grierson, 2000: 109). The time for questioning is now, as midnight is never far away. It is in the work of art that we might recall the questions to ask: "What happens here? What is at work?"

The work of art and unconcealment

What else might be at work in "the realm where revealing and unconcealment take place, where *alētheia*, truth, happens" (Heidegger, 1977a: 13) if "the revealing that brings forth (*poiēsis*) is also a way that has the character of destining" (Heidegger, 1977a: 29)? It seems that we have now come beyond art as a thing to be represented, as we move towards the question of revealing as truth in the work; and with that we have emerged from the reliance on the correspondence theory of truth into another process of truth happening in the work of art. All these questions, and more, are worked-through by Heidegger in "The Origin of the Work of Art" where, in his customary style of circularity, he started with the nub of the problem concerning the *origin* of the work of art – "The artist is the

origin of the work. The work is the origin of the artist. Neither is without the other” (Heidegger, 1999c: 143), and circled through questions of “Thing and Work” (Heidegger, 1999c: 146-165), “Work and Truth” (Heidegger, 1999c: 165-182), “Truth and Art” (Heidegger, 1999c: 182-203) (following his three lectures), ending with an Epilogue referring to “the riddle of art” and noting that his foregoing reflections “are far from claiming to solve the riddle. The task is to see the riddle” (Heidegger, 1999c: 204). So what sort of riddle, what sort of “disclosure” is taking place here? For the reader there has been no easy solution, no correspondence in questioning the question of truth. The reader has been set to work as the truth is set to work in the work of language and thought.

What happens, in Heideggerian terms, through the work of art, as in the writing and reading of the text, is an unconcealment of questions of concealment, “where *alētheia*, truth, happens”. The relations of reader and viewer, writer and artist, text and image, are inflecting each other when brought into relations through language as a way of being. For Heidegger the work of art is neither “present-at-hand” nor “ready-to-hand” as the entities in *Being and Time*. As Smeyers explains (Smeyers, 2002: 82), “The work of art is neither of these but rather an entity through which the truth of beings is disclosed – it has a privileged relation to Being, similar only to that accorded to *Dasein*”. Krell writes of Heidegger’s later thoughts on this relation in “Building Dwelling Thinking” (1951):

To the thing as technological component and as scientific object Heidegger opposes the thing as the place where the truth of Being, disclosedness, happens. In the work of art such disclosedness is compellingly experienced – perhaps most of all in the work of poetry (Krell, 1999: 344).

So in Munch’s work of art something more than experiencing art as categorised thing or entity, aesthetic object or cultural document is to be considered possible. The work opens a space where the world might be pictured in different ways. Firstly, the art work has been *represented* in its referential object-being, via the image content of a man by a fjord, overwrought with anxiety, metaphorised in terms of Man in a contemporary state of being in a destitute Western world at the end of the nineteenth century, a time of modernity in crisis. Secondly, the picture of a man overcome with anxiety is brought, in its “workly character”, into relation with the world in a way that “presences”, that “gather[s] towards presencing, by that which opens itself” (Heidegger, 1977b: 131) to the world of strife. In the first, via epistemological processes of representation, Munch was in correspondence with the clutter, confusion and over-

occupation of social and personal spaces of anxiety. He was surrounded by mortality and angst; the evidence records it; and he thereby expressed it in a painting whose iconography was later interpreted in the language of historical liberalism as the sublime moment of terror before Nature. As Bischoff (Heidegger, 1990: 53) put it, "the fear and loneliness of Man in a natural setting which — far from offering any kind of consolation — picks up the scream and echoes it beyond the bay unto the bloody vaults of heaven". Then there is the media interpretation of *The Scream* as an object of correspondence in the contemporary event of an art heist.

However, Heidegger's way of thinking about the work of art and its relation to *Dasein* involves something more, in the work, that perhaps we have not yet located. If his way of thinking raises the question of *Dasein*, as an essential relation to questions about the work of art, it follows that *Dasein* is well-embedded in these historically inflected discussions where lies "the constellation in which revealing and concealing, in which the coming to presence of truth, comes to pass" (Heidegger, 1977a: 33).

The destitution of modernity

The Scream stands historically as an iconic work of the modern world's sense of anxiety, but what of its "presencing"? Heidegger was not alone in his diagnosis of modernity as a sickness. Commentators place him alongside Dostoyevsky, Nietzsche, and Kierkegaard (see, for example, David Roberts on Heidegger and Existentialism, 1966; although Lovitt (Lovitt, 1977: xiii) writes, "Heidegger is not an 'existentialist'. He is not concerned centrally or exclusively with man").

Heidegger's concern was deeper than an epistemological arena of enquiry. His concern was with "the relations between man and Being, with man as the *openness* to which and in which being presences and is known" (Lovitt, 1977: xiii). His project was deeply historical as it sought to deconstruct the determinations of historical Being in its *a priori* conceptions, from the metaphysical lineage and sovereignty of Aristotle and Kant in Western thinking. Working through this project, Heidegger located the question of truth through three junctures of history: "in the human or divine intellect" (Thomas Aquinas); "nowhere but in the mind" (Descartes); and "in the epoch of the incipient consummation of the modern age" (Nietzsche) (citing from *Nietzsche*, Krell, 1991: 252).

Where, then, lies the potential for "the incipient consummation" as the working through of "truth" in the "presencing" of the work of art; and how could such presencing be a process of revealing what is, and in what way truth presences? In Heidegger's work there is deep underlying concern

with a “sickness” of the modern world with its calculative thinking and “extinction of ‘the divine radiance’” (Young, 2002: 35). What is at stake here? Heidegger (Heidegger, 1977a: 33) puts it this way:

The coming to presence of technology threatens revealing, threatens it with the possibility that all revealing will be consumed in ordering and that everything will present itself only in the unconcealedness of standing-reserve. Human activity can never directly counter this danger. Human achievement alone can never banish it.

A grave danger is identified, that of the extinguishing of revealing through the consuming ordering of technology, and the technological thinking of productionist metaphysics, as “standing-reserve”. This Heidegger sees as a destitution. Heidegger “identifies three leading symptoms of modernity’s spiritual ‘sickness’: loss of the gods, the ‘violence’ of technology, and loss of ‘dwelling’ or ‘homelessness’” (Young, 2002: 3). These fundamental concerns for the modern world – the Western world of productionist metaphysics – underlie Heidegger’s project with its acute awareness of *Dasein*’s “own interpretive origins [as] a ‘destructuring’ or dismantling of the transmitted conceptual apparatus, a clearing of the congested arteries of a philosophical tradition that has all the answers but no longer experiences the questions – especially the question of its own provenance and purpose” (Krell, 1999: 21) – hence, the “diagnosis”.

Firstly, there is “loss of the gods” (Young, 2002: 32), which entails “loss of community” (Young, 2002: 32-33). Then the inability of man to “dwell”, that is “loss of being at home in the world, loss of ‘homeliness’ in the sense of the German *heimisch* – which Heidegger takes to constitute the ‘plight’ of modern humanity (BDT, p. 161)” (Young, 2002: 33). In this loss there is “modern man’s inability to ‘own’ death (WPF, p. 96)”. This is significantly the source of our anxiety as a “fundamental way of being-in-the-world” as we are fundamentally “insecure” and “homeless”, and as “we cannot own death, and since pain is an intimation of death, we cannot own pain either” (Young, 2002: 33).

The third major symptom, “‘the violence’ of modern technology – its violation of both non-human and human nature”, reduces all to “‘raw material’ for the process of production and consumption, a process which has no purpose other than its own self-perpetuation [...] and to fill up the emptiness left by the meaninglessness of modern life”, noting that this is particular to Western modernity (Young, 2002: 33). And Heidegger (Heidegger, 1977a: 17) turns us to face the ordering of the world and its work: “Everywhere, everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately

at hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering [...]. We call it the standing-reserve [*Bestand*]”.

So by these diagnoses man in the generalised sense is a sorry state in a world of over-technologised “standing-reserve” which is the danger and the destitution; and from there Heidegger proposes a “saving power” that could be accessed through the work of art in its revealing of spatial/temporal relations beyond its mere “object-being”. “The whole art industry, even if carried to the extreme and exercised in every way for the sake of works themselves, extends only to the object-being of the works. But this does not constitute their work-being”, says Heidegger (Heidegger, 1999c: 166) as he turns to a particular work of art to show more clearly the “work” of “disclosure”: Van Gogh’s painting of peasant shoes, which are, according to Heidegger, “a pair of peasant shoes and nothing more. And yet” (Heidegger, 1999c: 159).¹ He then shows, by his way of working through his text, that the painting “is the disclosure of what the equipment, the pair of peasant shoes *is* in truth. This work-being emerges into the unconcealment of beings, *alētheia*” (Heidegger, 1999c: 161). In this section of his essay he makes clear that we must not just settle for seeing or imagining “a pair of shoes in general, or simply look at the empty, unused shoes as they merely stand there in the picture” (Heidegger, 1999c: 159). What we are seeking to discover is “what the equipmental being of the equipment in truth is” (ibid.). So the being, *Dasein* must be interpreted in its moment of time and being as it brings the relations of time and being into proximity as a mode of “belonging”. This has a sense of dwelling in the time of being as a way of living in the world. “From out of this protected belonging the equipment itself rises to its resting-within-itself” (Heidegger, 1999c: 160).

He presents the exemplar of “the old wooden bridge” (in Heidegger, 1977a: 16; and Heidegger, 1999e: 354) spanning the river from bank to bank, which “brings stream and bank and land into each other’s neighbourhood” (Heidegger, 1999e: 354), as belonging in and with itself and gathering all into earth. The bridge “dwells” thereby in the relations of its being rather than dominating technologically as object in the landscape. Heidegger speaks also of the relational quality of the Greek temple that “makes visible the invisible space of air” as it “illuminates also that on which and in which man bases his dwelling” – that is earth, “the sheltering agent” (Heidegger, 1999c: 168). The Temple reveals a relational space of being: “The temple-work, standing there, opens up a world and at the same time sets this world back again on earth” (ibid.); and he takes this to the work of art and asks, “what, then, does the work-being of the work consist?” (Heidegger, 1999c: 169); and brings us to see a work of art that

is “set up” in a collection or exhibition in terms of its work-being relations rather than its object-being, and he asks, “What does the work, as work, set up?” And he answers this way: “Towering up within itself, the work opens up a world and keeps it abidingly in force” (ibid.).

The work follows the movement of showing as a way of concluding

Because the essence of technology is nothing technological, essential reflection upon technology and decisive confrontation with it must happen in a realm that is, on the one hand, akin to the essence of technology and, on the other, fundamentally different from it. Such a realm is art. But certainly only if reflection on art, for its part, does not shut its eyes to the constellation of truth after which we are *questioning* (Heidegger, 1977a: 35).

This essay has been questioning as it seeks to disclose something about the work of art and education, something about presencing in the work-being of work, something about being in time, in and with the world. There is something very temporal about this discussion in the process of its writing and reading. It appeals to no sense of transcendental hope that it will be grabbed and disseminated as the ultimate answer for a new approach to art, education or living. If there is a “heeding [of] Heidegger’s way” in the process of its writing and reading, then a process of “revealing and concealing, in which the coming to presence of truth, comes to pass” (Heidegger, 1977a: 33) may be at work.

Heidegger said, “the work erects a world which in turn opens a space for man and things” (Heidegger, 1999c: 141). If there is a clearing, an opening, through which “the truth of beings has set itself to work” (Heidegger, 1999c: 162) in the “workly” character of work, then technology might be at work here as “no mere means” but as “a way of revealing”. We are reminded by Heidegger (Heidegger, 1977a: 33) that, “The coming to presence of technology threatens revealing, threatens it with the possibility that all revealing will be consumed in ordering”. So it would seem there is something here to heed. “If we give heed to this, then another whole realm for the essence of technology will open itself up to us. It is the realm of revealing, i.e., of truth” (Heidegger, 1977a: 12).

If the work-being of the work of art, and the work of writing, can open up spaces for unconcealment of relations in the world, as a horizon of disclosure of both the “danger” and “saving power”, then we may seek a similar mode of unconcealment in our work of being in the world. We

may set ourselves to work as the "setting forth" of being and disclosure in the horizons of our labour.

We may thus set ourselves to work as a work of art in Heidegger's sense. In art, as in education, we may then open spaces "not to listen to a series of propositions but rather to follow the movement of showing" (Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, 1972). Then we might find a way to dismantle the pre-suppositions embedded in our metaphysicality of thinking, being and doing in Western frames of knowing the world. Rather than the *Enframing* of such correspondences in the world of work and living, we might heed Heidegger's way of throwing light upon the fundamental limitations of subject-object separations as a way of being in and with the world. Then, hearing Heidegger, we might set ourselves to work in such a way that exposes those limits and "in the sense of *poiësis*, lets what presences come forth into appearance" (Heidegger, 1977a: 27). And here lies the project of this discussion, to "pay heed to the way" as a "way of thinking" (Heidegger, 1977a: 3), and to reveal something of "the constellation of truth after which we are *questioning*" (Heidegger, 1977a: 35) in the time of *poiësis* in our work-being.

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THE PITCH BLACK NIGHT OF HUMAN CREATION: CALLING HEIDEGGER'S PHILOSOPHY OF TERROR TO ACCOUNT

PETER MURPHY

I.

The Greeks were the first historical people. At least Heidegger thought so. They were the first to create themselves in time, the first to break the rule of the habitual, the first to be original. The title of Heidegger's 1935 lecture on "The Origin of the Work of Art" sums up in three words—origin, work and art—the emergence of an historical people.¹ The "work" of the work of art is to open up a world. The "origin" of the work of art is the beginning, the advent in time, of such a world. This emergence in time is historical. "Art's" work is to create a world historical people.

The first historical people, the Greeks, were the beginning of all beginnings. Their beginning lay in the art of the Greek temple. This art work opened up a "world" (Heidegger, 1971: 41-43). This act of world creation was both an act of art and an act of nature. This aesthetic nature was the self-generating creating coming forth of things for the first time. "The Greeks", Heidegger muses, "called this emerging and rising in itself and in all things *phusis*" (Heidegger, 1971: 42).

As we'll see, this is both true and untrue. But, for the moment, let us just continue to follow Heidegger along.

"To be a work means to set up a world" (Heidegger, 1971: 44). To set up means to open up. To open up means to "to come forth for the very first time" (Heidegger, 1971: 46). The work of art opens a world by bringing forth all the fundamental distinctions of things—the remoteness and nearness, the scope and limits, of things. The rockiness of rocks, the glimmer of metals, the spaciousness of space, the colour of things—in short, the qualities of things, the self-subsistence of things, their is-ness, their being, originates when art opens a world. All of this comes forth

¹ See "The Origin of the Art of Work" in Heidegger, 1971.

from where? It comes forth from concealment, from self-seclusion, from what it is that shutters, protects, hides and conceals. In the case of stone and metal, that means the earth. Heidegger, the master of paradox, has the work of art—in other words, the work of world creation—bring forth the earth. “In setting up a world, the work sets forth the earth” (Heidegger, 1971: 46).

The work of art that begins a world does so by opening and revealing. It opens up both what is hidden away and what hides away. Even the earth, which conceals and hides, is brought forth by the work of unconcealment. Heidegger is determined to show what is concealed but in a very peculiar way. He is a master of paradox, do not forget. He is fascinated by a kind of truth that is an untruth (Heidegger, 1971: 60). There is no enlightenment intended here. The truth of unconcealment is intimately bound up with concealment, while openness brings forth denial and evasion. What is most open is what is most concealed, what is most disclosed is what is most shuttered.

The notion that truth is an untruth is, at first glance, perplexing. But in fact it is not unusual, and certainly the idea is not peculiar to Heidegger. Art is a fiction or an artifice, and yet it can tell the truth. It can reveal and show things that otherwise are obscure to us. Yet Heidegger is not talking about fiction or artifice or imagination. He is talking about some other truth.

This truth reveals what it reveals through evasion and denial. It unveils by concealment. This is the truth of war. It is the truth that is a war, with all of the characteristics of war not least evasion and deceit mobilized against openness and honesty. Truth, though, is not identifiable with one side or the other of this war. Truth is neither honesty nor deceit but rather the battle of the two. It is at war with itself. In this war, truth harbours concealment, and concealment is brought forward by revelation (Heidegger, 1971: 49). But this is not, Heidegger insists, slyly brushing off the Pre-Socratics, an “empty unity of opposites” (Heidegger, 1971: 49). Rather, truth is a war marked by “essential striving”. This is where “the opponents”—unveiling and concealing—“raise each other into the self-assertion of their natures” (ibid.). In this war, the work-being of work—the nature of the work of the art of creation—“consists in the fighting of the battle between world and earth”, openness and closure.

One wonders whether this tells us something about Heidegger's own nature as well. Was the nature of his own self, a battle ground between openness and concealment?

Whatever the case of Heidegger personally, the war of concealment and revelation is a strange battle. It is paradoxical battle. For in this battle,

enemies are friends and friends are enemies. When Heidegger asks Pilate's cynical question—"what is truth?"—he answers it simply enough: truth is untruth (Heidegger, 1971: 60). Openness is concealment. That is simple enough. But how does Heidegger get to that point?

Well, Heidegger says, the Greek word for truth, *alētheia*, means the unconcealedness of being (Heidegger 1971: 36, 51, 59). For the present, let us not worry that it means nothing of the kind. Greek truth, *alētheia*, was not revelation but the overcoming of oblivion. Truth was the antipodes of the mythical Hades and its river of Lethe, the source of deadly sleep. Greek truth negated the negation of the lethal soma because it stood aside, apart, from the birth and death of things in time. Greek truth signified what was imperishable or immortal.

Still, we should not argue about this, not yet anyway. Let us for the moment simply accept Heidegger's declaration at face value: Truth is unconcealment. So how then can truth also be concealment?

The sting in the tail, Heidegger declares—and Heidegger is a master of declaration—is that un-concealment was, for thought, the most concealed thing in Greek existence. The middle term of this conundrum was art. The work of art—which originates worlds, bringing them forth by opening them up—manages in this act of un-concealment to bring forth concealment. To explain this, Heidegger draws an analogy. Un-concealment is like a clearing in the midst of being. Thanks to this clearing, beings are revealed. But this has the effect that beings are concealed as well. Heidegger notes, and quite reasonably so, that everything we encounter, every presence we meet, always withholds itself (Heidegger, 1971: 53). This is the "curious opposition" of presence. Every time a being opens up, it also hides, obscures and conceals itself. It conceals, it denies, it dissembles (Heidegger, 1971: 54-55). Truth is untruth.

There is something in this. Revelation is not pretty. When we insist on the truth, when we demand that someone "tell me the truth", we often expect the worst. We expect something bad—sometimes something terrible—to be revealed. "Truth time" exposes bad things. We hide bad things. Truth exposes what has been hidden.

II.

Enough, for the moment, about truth—what about art? Art is a work that brings forth a world. The work is the bringing forth. Bringing forth is creation (Heidegger, 1971: 58). That which is created is the being that grows out of its own nature by its own accord. Creation is *phusis*—that

Greek word again (Heidegger, 1971: 59). Creation is the outgrowth of a self-growing, self-organizing nature. Creation is an “emerging and rising in itself and in all things”. That is a very Greek notion. We recognize the echoes of Plato and Aristotle in it. In Heidegger, though, self-organization, self-movement, and self-ruling are also self-originating in the sense of genesis. Preoccupation with genesis or origin is not characteristically Greek. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” is far removed from Plato’s demiurge that imitates the patterns of the forms of the cosmos. The work of art, the work of creation—in Heidegger’s account—is the work of origin or genesis. This hints at a Creator God. But Heidegger’s account is not theistic. Rather it is aesthetic. In other words, to the extent that it is religious, it is a kind of art-religion. It is the work of art that creates. It does so through the unmediated character of a beginning (Heidegger, 1971: 76). Origin, origination, and incipience are central to the work of art. Worlds are created through beginnings.

Such beginnings are an emergence in time out of nothing. There are no media or forms out of which worlds emerge, which is to say also that there is no mediation by immortal, durable, persistent forms. There is no metaphysics. This is so, Heidegger insists, because worlds are beginnings, and a beginning cannot begin *in* something else, determined *by* something else. It cannot be mediated *through* something else. This is so because beginnings—true beginnings which are also untrue beginnings—are world historic. History is the advent of what has no precedent.

Now a brief word of qualification: Such elemental beginnings, Heidegger maintains, have nothing to do with what is primitive. The primitive is futureless and endless. It remains outside of history’s time. In contrast a beginning contains in itself its own end. Origin thus supposes extinction. This is a paradox of creation. What is primitive in contrast doesn’t have this paradoxical character. A beginning thus is a beginning in time. It is an act of temporal differentiation as opposed to temporal repetition. This act discloses itself in a massive *polemos*. Creation is an upsurge in the midst of a titanic struggle of powers. It is destructive and constructive. As a consequence, worlds that have grown old are demolished, while other worlds, new worlds, worlds that are truly new, emerge in their place.

A beginning in time ferments strife. It does so because a beginning, an opening, is both unfamiliar and extraordinary. It is unfamiliar because it is new, and what is new, truly new, undoes what precedes it. This undoing is what makes that which is truly new also preternaturally extraordinary. It is extraordinary because it creates a world both that has a precedent (the Greek beginning) and that has absolutely no precedent whatsoever. World

historic creation is thus torn—it is impossibly, almost inconceivably torn. It is torn because it emerges in and out of an explosion of forces, each of which both obliterate and become the other. Thus, of necessity, this emergence contains strife—unimaginably tensile strife.

It is hardly surprising then that emergence is a state of emergency, and the beginning, the advent, is a war. Heidegger declares that beginnings begin in a war with the familiar and the ordinary. Art unleashes this war. It is a war of truth against itself. It is a war of truth that is fictional and of lies that reveal things. It is also a war between revelation and concealment. In this war, what is hidden is exposed and what is revealed hides itself from the world. Along the rim of this paradoxical volcanic rift occurs the act of foundation. Visceral paradoxes, like the paradox of the opening of the earth, help to elucidate the impossible-possible event of a ground-laying grounding (Heidegger, 1971: 76). In such a beginning, founding, or ground-laying occurs an act of history or, more precisely, the founding act of an historical people (Heidegger, 1971: 76-77).

This is Adventist History. According to Heidegger, this “in the beginning” has happened three times. The *first time* was in ancient Greece, “when Being was set into work, setting the standard”. The *second time* was in the Middle Ages when the realm of beings that Greece opened up was “transformed into a being in the sense of God’s creation”. Note the awkwardness of Heidegger’s expression when he talks about the medieval era. The *third time* of founding was the Modern Age—when beings became objects (Heidegger, 1971: 77). Heidegger’s philosophy is full of anticipation of the coming of a *fourth time*.

In each of these cases, history begins. It starts over but without repetition, even if the Greeks “set the standard”. Whenever the work of art does its work, a *thrust* enters history. Art does the work of truth at war with itself. It founds, it originates.

III.

In all of this, there are some things to agree with Heidegger. Yes, art is world making. Yes, acts of creation are paradoxical. Yes, there are a handful of societies that have managed to install paradox at their heart. Yes, the ancient Greeks and the Modern European West would be included in this cluster. It is doubtful, however, if the Middle Ages would make the grade—and, even if Heidegger would protest it, Rome and America also belong in this cohort, possibly Japan as well. All of these are societies driven by deep, deep paradoxes, sometimes almost unfathomable

paradoxes, and all them thus capable of acts of world making not seen, and more to the point not possible, in other less ambidextrous societies.

But, as for Heidegger's account of creation, I'd take issue with that in almost every aspect. What Heidegger offers is a philosophy of "creation out of nothing". The beginning that interrupts history, which starts and restarts it yet without repeating it, is a disclosure of Nothing. Creation brings forth the something that is nothing, or the nothing that is something. I happily accept that this is not *per se* nonsensical or rather it is a non-sense that makes sense. Creation and creativity rely on the force of paradox. This force might be thought of as the engine of creation. Paradox is essential to the nature or *phusis* of creation. What is at issue is not this generality, but rather the specific creationist paradox of the "creation of something out of nothing"—the creation of determinations out of indetermination.

To see where the creationist paradox leads Heidegger, let us turn our attention to the lecture series that he gave in the winter semester of 1941 (Heidegger, 1993). There, in those lectures, we begin to see clearly the menace of the idea of creation out of nothing, and the ominous implications of creation forged in the battle of the unfamiliar with the familiar amidst the strife of truth at war with itself.

This is the battle of a truth that is untruthful. It is war and, in war, warriors deceive. They survive on cunning and ruse. So creation out of nothing in the first instance is the hiding of truth that begins things by the un-concealing of them. Un-concealment, *alētheia*—that which for the Greeks had been the overcoming of the oblivion of death of the river *lethe*, the a-lethal act—in Heidegger's account hides the truth. Hiding the truth, lying, is the work of art. It reveals first by hiding a (dreadful) truth—the truth of obliteration that is the essence of Being. To this end Heidegger invokes Nietzsche: "One who tells the truth ends by realizing that he always lies" (Heidegger, 1991: 215). Thus "we have art so that we do not perish from the truth" (Heidegger, 1991: 216). "We need the lie in order that we achieve victory over this reality [...] in order to live" (Heidegger, 1991: 217). Still rehearsing Nietzsche, Heidegger says of art: it is the will to semblance. It is illusion, deception, and untruth. Art lies. The art of war is the art of lying. The lie of Nietzsche's artist, however, is not just strategic in nature. Its rationale is not just to attain victory over the enemy. More fundamentally the lie hides what is shocking, namely the works of *lethe*. It shelters us from the experience of its horror. It shields us from seeing what is dreadful. The lie is necessary so that we do not look into the abyss. We cannot cope with the unimaginable concealed in the abyss.

Heidegger, though, is not Nietzsche. For just as much as Heidegger admits to the power of the aesthetic lie, he also doesn't (really) believe in

it. Rather he wants us, mortals, to confront, engage, and be annihilated by the fatal truth of the abyss. This is why he says that truth is at war with itself. This is not truth in the Greek sense of a-lethal knowledge, the unvarnished counter to oblivious death. Heidegger's truth is not the Greek-Christian death of death (Carroll, 2001). It is not even the consoling untruthful truth that Nietzschean artists mint. It is not their coddled play with transgression and fictitious horror. Ordinary works of ordinary artists are works of imagination. Creation is the work of the unimaginable. This is the truth that succumbs to oblivion and that desires, or has us desire, death. It is a truth that throws back the shutters to reveal a petrifying pitiless nothingness. Truth is horror, truth is terror. Truth is the scream. If art hides it or prettifies it, then philosophy reveals it and sanctifies it. It does so not to silence the screams but in order to amplify them—for the scream is the unspeakable speech that is the sign, the confirmation, and the validation of the coming of annihilation. Heidegger's philosophy speaks truth to death when it calls up the obliteration that is the essence of being.

Obliteration, not just negation, on this account is creation. Only by destruction can new worlds be created. Thus, Heidegger reasons, human beings must become apolitical: "*without city and place, lonely, strange and alien... without statute and limit, without structure and order, because they themselves as creators must create all this*".² Only in nothing, and only through the overpowering power of struggle, strife and *polemos* that leads to the unutterable un-doing of things, do position, order and rank, cleavages, distributions and joints, in short, the world, open up. And only this type of world-becoming is creative.

Creation is originary or incipient (Heidegger, 1993: 5-6). This, Heidegger proposes, is the significance of the Greeks. They begin the beginning. They perform the first act of incipient creation, where the beginning contains the future or the end. When Heidegger says that "the inception of our history is the Greeks", what he means is that the Greeks are the beginning of beginnings, the foundation of foundations (Heidegger, 1993: 13). Let us all be "struck by the incipient", he declares (Heidegger, 1993: 17).

I am not sure that exposing ourselves to the thunder-bolt of the incipient is, at all or in any respect, a good idea—at least if we place any value at all on our lives. We will soon enough discover that, so far as incipient creation is concerned, the act of creation requires our destruction. This is the concealed truth of the beginning and subsequent re-beginnings

² This comes from Heidegger's 1942 lectures on *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*. The translation is taken not from the standard English language translation, Heidegger (1996), but from Ward (Ward, 1995: 192).

of historical peoples. What is hidden, understandably, is that creation requires our annihilation.

This is so because Nothing corresponds to Being (Heidegger, 1993: 44). Being is the being that grows of its own accord... out of nothing. What is nothing? Heidegger insists that it is not something "indifferently negative" (Heidegger, 1993: 45). Nothing is not just "nothing" (Heidegger, 1993: 45). Nothing rather is the paradoxical empty something that invokes Terror. It calls up the horror of standing before the Nothing that is nihilation (Heidegger, 1993: 45). It derives meaning from the terror unleashed by extermination.

Nihilation is not just a metaphor. Out of the terror of the beginning, the history of a world emerges. Heidegger explains this with casual brutality: "[...] the Nothing does not need beings in order to be the Nothing as a result of their elimination" (Heidegger, 1993: 46). This, remember, is 1941. And should the auditor have missed the point, Heidegger immediately reiterates with emphasis: "The Nothing does not need beings" (Heidegger, 1993: 46).

Put another way: Being is empty. It is the emptiest emptiness (Heidegger, 1993: 46). It is also an emptiness that is a surplus. This is an inverted Neo-Platonism. It is the inverse of the Neo-Platonic plenitude that overflows. It is a barrenness that generates a surplus. Should anyone still be unsure of what Heidegger is getting at, he announces a little further on in his lectures that: "in the extremity of the desired annihilation of all beings, and precisely here, being must appear" (Heidegger, 1993: 52).

In case you missed that, I'll repeat it: "in the extremity of the desired annihilation of all beings, and precisely here, being must appear."

Are you still not sure that Heidegger means what he says? Then consider that still further on in the 1941 winter lectures, he again warms to the theme that there is nothing ordinary and everything terrifying about Nothing. Indeed, so extraordinary is it, this is a horror that exceeds our capacity to imagine it: "[...] to us the Nothing is not a nullity. To recoil in terror of annihilation and to be horrified by devastation is to shrink back from something that cannot be addressed as mere imagination, as something baseless" (Heidegger, 1993: 61). Heidegger often returns to the point that "nothing" is not a mere negative. In his 1942 lectures on Hölderlin's "The Ister", he equates nothing with the uncanny, with what is frightful, powerful and in-habitual, with what overpowers and unmakes the home (Heidegger, 1996: 63-87). This un-homeliness is the act of a being, the human being, which proceeds towards its own death (Heidegger, 1996: 75). This is a being that comes to nothing. This is the being whose nature is "un". This "un" is the nature of a being that destroys

its homely self in the drive for what is in-habitual and extra-ordinary. The “un” is not just a negation but an overpowering of things. This overpowering, this uncanny power, towers above humanity, revealing itself in horror and terror. In order to create, this power must annihilate.

IV.

In works of fiction, horror is left to the imagination. In the works of uncanny bestiality, however, the horror is unimaginable. It can be prosaically reported and meticulously recorded but the imagination is repelled by it. Take for instance the recorded works of that attentive student of Hitler and Stalin, the Baath Party leader and psychopath Saddam Hussein. Even professionals collecting evidence on Saddam’s torturers find the videos of their deeds almost impossible to watch.³ To watch means having to imagine unimaginable horror. It means having to imagine the endless repetition of such horror. The human mind flinches and turns away from such thoughts. The imagination shudders, in revulsion, as the video clip:

opens amid Saddam’s elite troops, Saddam Fedayeen, chanting ‘With blood and spirit we will redeem you Saddam.’ The Fedayeen stand barking and clapping in a courtyard. A blindfolded prisoner, forced to his knees and held in position, has his arm outstretched before him along a low concrete wall. A masked member of the Fedayeen raises high a three-foot-long blade and ferociously slams down on the man’s hand, slicing through his fingertips. The victim is wailing, screaming in agony. The swordsman-torturer, not sufficiently satisfied with his first effort, raises the sword again and drives down once more on the man’s immobile hand. This time he severs the fingers closer to the knuckles as the blood spurts from his hand spilling over and down the concrete slab. The victim emits a wail I have never heard—*could never imagine hearing*—from a grown man, this time louder, harder than the first (Shawcross, 2005).

Such terror of annihilation as this cannot be grasped, or long contemplated, by the imagination. For terror of this kind is unimaginable. It is not the terror of the sublime imagination that we are familiar with, say, from Kant’s Third Critique. Rather, in the case of the unimaginable, we are on the terrain of the French Revolution where

³ The following is drawn from the account by the great reporter and broadcaster, William Shawcross (2005). The quotes are from the documentary producer Nick Schulz who recounts how he was “unable to sit through these clips at first, having to turn away several times[...].”

the guillotine has replaced the imagination, and horror is enacted on a mass scale. Such terror is not the work of ruthless statecraft that torments its enemies but rather it is the commission of social desecration on a scale that is beyond imagination. This is a world, or perhaps more exactly an under-world, or an un-world, where day after day, in endless procession, tens of thousands of times:

a hooded and blindfolded prisoner is led to a room where he is forced to kneel, hands tied behind his back. Another man sits before the prisoner with thick metal tweezers and a scalpel. With his left hand he grabs the prisoner's tongue with the tweezers and pulls it forward from his head. With the scalpel in his other hand, he slices through the prisoner's tongue, cutting it from his mouth and then dropping it on the floor (ibid.).

In the works of the unimaginable, when deeds such as this are repeated an incalculable numbers of times, there is an unmistakable strain of social necrophilia. When the power of the unimaginable became explicit, for the first time, in the Terror of the French Revolution, death is transformed in status from a violent political means to a necrotic social end. Death's works are enacted on an all-consuming social scale.

The germ of this necrotic strain threaded its way for centuries through the Faustian art-culture and art-religion of the European West. It mutated from the Gothic era via the Baroque to Romanticism. But it is not until the French Revolution that the threshold between grisly imagination and the unimaginable is finally crossed over. What made the difference? Most crucially, the all-devouring overpowering of state and society found a justification—in the act of creation.

As Heidegger later put it, creation cannot abide structure and order, statute and limit because creators must create all of this. The radicalism of Heidegger is evident when he quotes from a letter that Hölderlin wrote to his brother (Heidegger, 1993: 62). Hölderlin puzzles about whether the assault of Nothing on society and humankind should be opposed? Heidegger's answer to this question is a mocking rhetorical counter-question. What if the Nothing that horrifies man and displaces him from his usual dallying and evasions were the same as Being? If this was the case, Heidegger reasons, then Being would have to announce itself as something horrifying and dreadful. For anything else is an avoidance of Being. There is no doubt that Heidegger thinks that the time has come for this announcement. It is too late for any more equivocation.

So no wonder that disclosure, un-concealment and truth function to hide, cover up and conceal something dreadful. This is the secret of nihilation that ordinary humanity, sensibly, evades. To be shaken from this

evasion is to be confronted with the horror and dread of Nothing. Out of this Nothing and the fear and trembling it breeds comes new worlds. The new originates in dread and fear. Creation out of nothing is the vocation of those who do not evade the horrifying and the dreadful but who embrace and enact it. It is the vocation of those who contemplate, not the beauty of forms, but the works of devastation and holocaust. It is the vocation of those who wish for the worst not the best.

Heidegger very pointedly states in his 1942 lectures on Hölderlin that the Nothing of the unimaginable belongs to evil (Heidegger, 1996: 78). Extraordinarily, he instructs us to understand this evil not as something morally bad, that is as something characteristic of human behavior, but as an essential trait of Being itself within whose realm human beings journey. He divines that what is morally reprehensible in human beings is *evil but not immoral* in the context of Being. This is an appalling distinction yet one that, in various guises, has been remarkably influential from the epoch of the French Revolution onwards via Communism and Nazism to Islamofascism. Perhaps in understanding Heidegger's distinction, chilling as it is, we might move a step closer to making some sense of this long and disturbing passage through the pitch black night of human creation. The conundrum of modern life is not so much that necromanticism exists, although that is puzzling enough, but that the desire for abysmal nothingness has continuously reinvented itself in ever more gruesome ways in the last two hundred years and, in the course of these reincarnations, has attracted endless followers who see mass murder as an evil that is not immoral, a license to commit the worst of crimes and yet have them exculpated.⁴

⁴ That Heidegger's philosophy should have become a court philosophy for Iran's theocratic state should not surprise us. The messianic death fixation of that regime, which sacrificed hundreds of thousands of its subjects in the apocalyptic primitive slaughter of the Iraq-Iran War, has uncanny parallels with Germany in the 1930s. When Jurgen Habermas made his 2002 sojourn to Iran, he observed: "During the 1990s, Martin Heidegger and Karl Popper provided the key terminology for a debate between Reza Davari Ardakani on the one side and Abdolkarim Soroush on the other. Davari is now president of the Academy of Sciences and classed with the 'postmodernists'. The latter were particularly drawn to the analysis of the 'nature of technology' in Heidegger's later writings and linked it to the Iranian critique of Western modernity. Soroush, meanwhile, who is currently spending a semester as guest lecturer at Harvard, personally tends toward a mystical branch of Islam, but, as a Popperian, is a resolute adherent of a cognitive division of labor between religion and science. If I understood it correctly, during this dispute Davari rose to the status of philosophical spokesman of the Shiite orthodoxy, while Soroush

V.

The refrain of those who march to the tune of “*evil but not immoral*” is that what begins, ends, and what ends, begins. In both cases, the end is annihilation and only the time of destruction can give birth to worlds. Time casts a deep shadow across the body of Heidegger’s philosophy. The conjugation of “being and time” is the most powerful leitmotif of his work. Historical time is the midwife of precocious acts of creation. These acts are undetermined. Nothing, *nihil*, “causes” them. They are unmediated. These miraculous beginnings in time are preceded by nothing and are destined to expire in nothing. Nothing is the emptiness that is filled up with the pure difference of “un”. Time creates through “un”-doing. The “un”-doings of historical time precede and postdate creation. The constant alteration of time’s “un”-doings is the only constant left us. It is the only (ironic) trace of the metaphysical.

Heidegger repeatedly and insistently attributes creation, creation out of nothing and into nothing, to the Greeks. But Greek nature or *phusis*, the coming forth or originating of something out of itself, was not ever, and could not ever be, creation out of nothing. The notion of an emergence out of nothing is shaped by the theistic creation mythology of the Middle East. It underpins the biblical account of genesis. The Greeks had no interest in genesis thinking. For the Greeks, *phusis* implied durable, imperishable form. Creation, which was usually understood as a kind of making, occurred when the material stuff of self, society and nature was molded by form, reason or spirit. From the Pre-Socratics through Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics and the Epicureans, there were lively arguments about the nature of this nature. But mostly it was agreed that *phusis* was a kind of self-propelling morphology. Whatever was said in these debates, no one ever equated the morphology of form, reason or spirit with nothing—whether this was the nothing of birth or the nothing of extinction.

Heidegger understood the morphological nature of Greek *phusis* perfectly well. In the first volume of his Nietzsche lectures, he gives a very fine account of Platonism (Heidegger, 1991: 162-199). He describes how the Greek *phusis* brings forth form or *morphe*, the limit or the boundary, the configuration of a being. He also describes how one’s delight in art arises from logical, mathematical feelings—from the feeling for letting one’s mood be determined by order, boundary and overview. Yet, for Heidegger, the lure of destruction, change and becoming, or rather their

continues, albeit with dwindling influence, to favor an institutional division of political and religious realms” (Habermas, 2002).

continuum, is irresistible. The durability and constancy of Platonic metaphysical being cannot trump the seduction of alteration and destruction. Nor can it separate the one of these (alteration) from the other (destruction).

Here we have before us two models of creation, two concepts of *phusis*. For Heidegger, point blank, “the origin of something is the source of its nature.” This is an opening shot from his 1935 lecture. According to this view, art is the un-concealment of the source, founding or beginning of things. Historical peoples emerge from such beginnings. They are a genesis out of the Nothing that terrifies. This view of things does not belong to the form thinking of the Greeks but to the genre of genesis thinking that meanders from pre-modern theistic creationism to modern necromanticism and its philosophies of Terror (Murphy and Roberts, 2004). Genesis thinking equates origin (a beginning in time) and nature. The counter-view, the Classical Greek view, is that nature is *phusis* not *arche*. *Phusis*, from which all things emerge, is a set of immutable aesthetic qualities—like symmetry, proportionality, harmony, and rhythm. Such metaphysical, Platonic qualities underpin the grandest expressions of cosmos, society and self.

When historical peoples turn against metaphysics, besotted by the lure of genesis, the result is nihilism and necromanticism. The point made here is precisely the contrary of Heidegger’s egging-on of the German catastrophe. The antidote to such catastrophes is proper respect for *phusis*, for the timeless super symmetry symbolized by Nature. Nature’s forms are immutable. They are the antithesis of a truth that has become historical. This historical truth is a leap that begins in time. It originates like a Creator God does, and this origination supposes annihilation. It creates strife—a rift in continuity. It is this, the destructive advent of historical time, which reveals the equation of Being and Nothingness.

Such an equation is a heady justification of art, just as sublime aesthetic obliteration is a heady explanation of social invention and world creation. It excites and it entralls. But once the intoxication passes, there is the aftermath of terrible creation-termination to consider. The signs of aftermath are Faustian exhaustion and necromantic devouring of society and art. As we pick our way through the wasteland of social obliteration littered with deathworks, products of abject imaginations that have fallen disastrously in love with the unimaginable, we begin to understand a final awful merciless equation—that out of nothing comes nothing.

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MARTIN HEIDEGGER AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF NEGATIVITY

PAOLO BARTOLONI

1.

The reflection on language as “the house of Being” permeates Heidegger’s work from “Letter on Humanism” [1946] (1993) onwards. Heidegger returns insistently to this reflection, especially with regard to poetic language, and the affinities between poetic language and thinking. Heidegger is said to believe that philosophy does not begin with thought, but with astonishment, surprise, errancy (Safranski, 1998: 1); in a word, with poetry. And in fact, the entrance into philosophy through poetry gradually becomes Heidegger’s favourite route to thinking and for thinking. It is no accident, then, that his attention and investigation of poetry increase dramatically from the mid 1930s, especially from the 1934-1935 lectures on Hölderlin’s hymns to Germany and the Rhein (1980). It is in the poetry of Hölderlin first, and later in that of Rilke, George and Trakl that Heidegger looks for that unique trigger to his thought. It does not come as a surprise either if, in the same period, also known as *Kehre*, Heidegger’s dealings with pre-Socratic thought, especially Parmenides, Heraclitus, Anaximander, assume the character of poetic readings. It is also perhaps because of Heidegger’s penchant for poetry – and of course, because of his “poetic” style of philosophising – that some commentators have labelled him, and not always favourably, a poet rather than a philosopher (Megill, 1985; Gottlieb, 1990).

In the collection of lectures/essays delivered in 1957-1958 and brought under the title of *On the Way to language (Unterwegs zur Sprache)* we find a text which is of particular interest in the discussion of the relation between poetry and thinking. I am referring to “Words” (*Das Wort*). This lecture is a close reading of a poem by Stefan George, “The Word” (*Das Wort*). It is also a further attempt on the part of Heidegger to think the

meaning and the significance of the statement “language is the house of Being” that he made in *Letter on Humanism*.

“Words” starts with a puzzling reference to a place (*Ort*): “From where we are now (*von diesem Ort*)”, writes Heidegger, “let us for a moment think what Hölderlin asks in his elegy ‘Bread and Wine’...” (Heidegger, 1982: 139). The first inclination is to interpret “place” as the locus where the thinking is occurring, in this case Heidegger’s *On the Way to Language*. We look at the book to see which essay precedes “Words”. In the English translation the essay in question is “On the Way to Language”, which is therefore assumed as the place from which the thinking of Holderlin’s elegy, and Heidegger’s subsequent investigation, ought to start. The two lectures seem to dovetail rather nicely since the last two pages of “On the Way to Language” engage explicitly with the relation between language and Being in ways that are germane to “Words”. Not only does Heidegger insist on the connection language/Being, but he explains it by arguing that “Language is the house of Being because language, as Saying, is the mode of Appropriation” (Heidegger, 1982: 135).

Through Saying language appropriates Being by keeping being, the thing, present. But in order to achieve the presencing of being – Heidegger also calls this presencing “face to face”, whose resemblance with unconcealment and *aletheia* is not without significance – humans must attain a special relation to language, which also implies a transformation of language. “In order to pursue in thought the being of language and to say of it what is its own, a transformation of language is needed which we can neither compel nor invent” (Heidegger, 1982: 135). In other words, through Saying language guards being. But in order to turn this concealment in language into an unconcealment in language, Heidegger invites humans to accomplish a particular exposure to language, which requires a transformation of the relation with language. Language must be approached differently.

It is rather instructive that in order to bring his argument to a close, Heidegger chooses to quote a passage from Wilhelm von Humboldt that seems to contradict his entire conceptualisation. Here is the quotation: “Without altering the language as regards its sounds and even less its forms and laws, *time* – by a growing development of ideas, increased capacity of sustained thinking, and a more penetrating sensibility – will often introduce into language what it did not possess before” (Heidegger, 1982: 136).

Everything seems to fit apart from the last significant statement: “time will often introduce into language what it did not possess before”, which

means that for Humboldt Being is not at home in language. It might be introduced into it as long as changes of knowledge and sensibility are brought to bear on language. What kind of place is this from which Heidegger farewells us to greet us again at the following station as if Humboldt had never been mentioned?

2.

And, in fact, this is not the *place*. If one looks at the German edition of *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (1975), one soon realizes that *Das Wort* is preceded by *Das Wesen der Sprache* ("The Nature of Language") and followed by *Der Weg zur Sprache* ("On the Way to Language"). This is the original order of the three lectures, which has been radically altered in the English translation for reasons that one can only speculate about. Was it perhaps thought that "The Nature of Language" and "Words" were too similar, the latter being almost a repetition of the former? Would perhaps the reader in English object less to the book, should the uncanny similarities between "the Nature" and "Words" be mitigated by interspersing them with "On the Way"?

In "The Nature of Language" Heidegger sets the tone for the three lectures on language, which he considers as individual parts of a whole. In "The Nature of Language" he expressly says that the purpose of these lectures is to "undergo an experience with language" (Heidegger, 1982: 57) which might be "helpful to us to rid ourselves of the habit of always hearing only what we already understand" (Heidegger, 1982: 58). Heidegger wishes to experience, and perhaps write, a language, whose relation with him is different from the one he has with traditional – one might be tempted to say metaphysical – language. In other words, Heidegger intends to experience a meeting with a language which, remaining the same, says things differently. It is in this sense that the preposition "a" before language is strictly incorrect. This is not another language, it is instead the same language that relates to us, and us to it, differently. Heidegger explains this further: "In experiences which we undergo *with* language, language itself brings itself to language. One would think that this happens anyway, any time anyone speaks. Yet at whatever time and in whatever way we speak a language, language itself never has the floor" (Heidegger, 1982: 59).

As we now see, in Heidegger's terminology "*a* language" is not language. Language is that which speaks "itself as language". When does this happen? "Curiously enough", answers Heidegger, "when we cannot

find the right word for something that concerns us, carries us away, oppresses or encourages us" (ibid.).

As an example of the coming of language to itself, Heidegger discusses Stefan George's poem *Das Wort*, whose final line reads: "Where words break off no thing may be." What is at stake here is precisely what Heidegger draws attention to when he refers to the breaking of words in the face of "something that concerns us".

This is the *place* from where Heidegger can continue his analysis of George's poem, together with his investigation of thinking and poetry. As Heidegger tells us, Stefan George first published "Words" "in the 11th and 12th series of *Blätter für die Kunst*" in 1919". (Heidegger, 1982: 140) He later included it "in the last volume of poems published in his life-time, called *Das Neue Reich* (ibid.).

George's poem is about the poetic journey, and the experience of confronting the mystery of life, in the hope of giving this mystery concreteness through language. But this hope is destined to remain unfulfilled since not even the depth of poetry, its magic and inspiration, can say the unsayable. So while the poet holds the mystery in his hands, waiting for poetic language to transform the mystery into the reality of a presence, the mystery slips away, as the poet learns that there is no word that can "enfold these depths." The last two stanzas read: "And Straight it vanished from my hand,/ The treasure never graced my land.../ I then sadly learned renunciation:/ Where word breaks off no thing may be (*So lernt ich traurig den verzicht:/ Kein ding sei wo das wort gebricht*)."

Heidegger's investigation focuses on the last two lines, and especially on the notion of renunciation (*verzicht*). The question and the philosophical problem that Heidegger engages with is whether this renunciation simply leaves the poet empty handed, and sadly melancholic in the face of negativity and emptiness.

What takes place in the following pages is a great feat of rhetorical and philosophical bravura through which Heidegger turns the notion of renunciation from negative into positive. This reversal of fortune might not say very much about George's poem, but may say a great deal about Heidegger's philosophy and its insights into ontology. In other words, while the connection between philosophy and literature remains here ambiguous and not totally convincing, the conclusions at which Heidegger arrives are striking and of outmost importance, especially in relation to a philosophical trend characterising the second half of the twentieth century, including the work of Blanchot and Agamben.

3.

One might wish that Heidegger had chosen a more consonant poem for his discussion. One that comes straight to mind is the “Buried Harbour” by Italian poet Giuseppe Ungaretti. This poem was written in 1916, only three years before George’s *Das Wort*. It reads: “The poet goes there/ then returns to the light with his songs/ and scatters then/ Of this poetry there remains to me/ that nothing/ of inexhaustible secrecy” (Ungaretti, 1990: 26). George’s and Ungaretti’s poems are similar. They both present a journey into other lands from which the poet returns with precious treasures which, however, soon turn into nothingness. And yet the nothingness in Ungaretti “remains” present as “inexhaustible secrecy”. Heidegger would very likely equate this secrecy with a near remoteness. But let us quote Heidegger on this very crucial point. “As a mystery,” he writes glossing George’s poem, “the word remains remote. As a mystery that is experienced, the remoteness is near. The perdurance of this remoteness of such nearness is the nondenial of self to the word’s mystery. There is no word for this mystery, that is, no Saying which could bring the being of language to language” (Heidegger, 1982: 154).

And yet the mystery is not gone, is not negative. It is rather present through its withdrawing. It remains located in the space between poetry and thinking; and from where we are we can try to listen to it by thinking with poetry and through poetry. I have just paraphrased the last paragraph of Heidegger’s lecture *Das Wort*, which reads: “In order that we may in our thinking fittingly follow and lead this element worthy of thought as it gives itself to poetry, we abandon everything which we have now said to oblivion. We listen to the poem. We grow still more thoughtful now regarding the possibility that the more simply the poem sings in the mod of song, the more readily our hearing may err” (Heidegger, 1982: 156).

Besides, “singing” and “songs”, these two concepts so central to Heidegger’s discussion of George’s *Das Wort*, are also vital to Ungaretti’s “The Buried Harbour”. Let us remember that in Ungaretti the poet returns to light with his “songs” (*canti*).

For Heidegger it is not, however, a matter of choosing the right poem since he is not interested in engaging with a process of exegesis, whose aim is to illustrate and elucidate the meanings of a given poem. Rather, Heidegger is interested in using the poem as the preferred path to an experience with language. Strictly speaking, he is not so much reading the poem as listening to it.

Heidegger’s interpretations of Hölderlin, George, Rilke, Trakl are not literary interpretations in the conventional sense of the word. There is not

much we can learn from these readings if they are understood as exegetical readings. They are instead examples of an original experience of language and being undergone by Heidegger together *with* poetry (Bruns, 1989).

4.

But how is it that “renunciation” becomes positive, and therefore ontologically relevant and consubstantial to Heidegger’s mode of thinking? The key to this question must be looked for in the verb that accompanies renunciation in George’s poem: “to learn” (*So lernt ich traurig den verzicht*). According to Heidegger the poet in *Das Wort* is not simply renouncing, he has learned renunciation (Heidegger, 1982: 143). To Heidegger the difference between “renunciation” and “learning renunciation” is of paramount importance. To him learning means “to become knowing” (ibid.), that is, to enter a process of active engagement with thinking, and, in this particular case, with language. This process Heidegger equates with a journey, and with a movement of discovery. The subject places himself underway through the action of learning. But what is it that the poet learns? He learns renunciation. For Heidegger, this renunciation translates into the active affirmation of the predisposition to experience language as language. While it is true that the thing remains unsaid, it is also true that it remains close to language, adhering to language unsaying. Heidegger’s punch line comes a little later in the essay when, as already discussed, he argues that language’s Saying resides precisely in its non-saying:

Because this renunciation is a genuine renunciation, not just a rejection of Saying, not a mere lapse into silence. As self-denial, renunciation remains Saying. It thus preserves the relation to the word. But because the word is shown in a different, higher rule, the relation to the word must undergo a transformation. Saying attains to a different articulation, a different *melos*, a different tone. The poem itself, which tells of renunciation, bears witness to the fact that the poet’s renunciation is experienced in this sense – by singing of renunciation (Heidegger, 1982: 147).

It is this qualification that allows Heidegger to distinguish between a lower tone of language (the saying with a small “s”) and a higher tone of language (the Saying with a capital “S”). The latter is brought about through a special exposure to language that is achieved through renunciation. It is this availability to be with language as language that, according to Heidegger, brings about the coming “face to face with what

is primevally worthy of thought, and which we can never ponder sufficiently” (Heidegger, 1982: 155). Hence the philosopher, thanks to the self affirmation of the poet through renunciation, can contemplate and listen to the mystery of the word, whose echo resounds in the singing of the language that has renounced its saying.

5.

This is, as Gianni Vattimo has argued, the Heidegger who has been interpreted as the philosopher who experiences Being by withdrawing Being – as opposed to the Heidegger who chases Being in order to reconnect with it (Vattimo: 1994).

But exactly what is this renunciation; is it the romantic celebration of losing oneself in contemplation? It might very well sound like a mystical experience in which, paraphrasing a romantic Italian poet, Giacomo Leopardi, the shipwrecking of the subject in the mystery of life becomes sweet. And yet in Heidegger this sweetness is not so much romantic as phenomeno-ontological. As early as the beginning of the 1920s, at the time when he was considered the “child of phenomenology”, Heidegger was lecturing about the need to place oneself before the world (Heidegger, 1987: 113), which meant to resist, and indeed abolish, reified and culturally institutionalised attitudes to things. He preached the philosophical significance of looking at things as such in order to regain them to their “worldiness” (Heidegger, 1987: 71-72). In the lecture *Das Wort*, Heidegger uses a similar term, “bethinging” (*die Bedingnis*), which becomes the higher rule of the word “which first lets a thing be as thing.” (Heidegger, 1982: 151) In reality Heidegger never let his phenomenological education to wander too far off from him.

Renunciation, suspension, destruction and errancy will recur again and again throughout Heidegger’s work with the same meaning, that is, opening oneself, unconcealing oneself to a higher experience of the world. It is in this sense, for instance, that the philosophical potency of destruction in *What is Philosophy* [1956] (1963), resembles the discussion of renunciation: “Destruction does not mean destroying, but dismantling, putting to one side the merely historical assertions about the history of philosophy. Destruction means – to open our ears, to make ourselves free for what speaks to us in tradition as the Being of being. By listening to this interpellation we attain the correspondence” (Heidegger, 1963: 73).

While here destruction initiates a correspondence with the origin of philosophy, in *Das Wort* renunciation introduces a correspondence with

the origin of language. Both experiences set the subject free – unconcealed and open – to undergo an experience of the Being of being.

There is a final philosophical element to the lecture *Das Wort* that is worth mentioning, also because it reconnects and dovetails superbly with the notion of renunciation: I am referring to the notion of potentiality. We have to remember, in Heidegger's invitation to the reader, is that in renouncing the word the poet does not renounce the Saying, he rather renounces himself to the saying. Heidegger follows this clarification by stating that: "He has allowed himself – that is, such Saying as will still be possible for him in the future – to be brought face to face with the word's mystery, the be-thinging of the thing of the word" (Heidegger, 1963: 151). In other words, by suspending the saying, the poet is brought in the proximity of the mystery, face to face with it.

Is renunciation, then, a kind of scholastic bridge between reality and the origin of reality, between the ontic and the ontological, between the end of metaphysics and the origin of metaphysics? What is it that we have learned, that reality is much more than what we think it is? In a sense yes, but also that our relationship with the world is open to an active potentiality, whose affirmation and action are explicitly articulated by Heidegger. And yet, this articulation generates more questions than answers, leaving the significance of renunciation suspended within an opaque, indeterminate and ultimately unresolved philosophical event.

6.

Those who follow Heidegger and interpret and study his work have long been dealing with this indeterminacy in the attempt to bring it to fruition. Again, it useful here to remember Vattimo's distinction between the interpretations of Heidegger from the left and those from the right. Vattimo places himself on the left, especially if one considers the significant philosophical project known as *pensiero debole* (weak thought). In *pensiero debole* Vattimo investigates the affirmative and potentially constructive elements of what has also been termed the negative existentialism of Heidegger.

Another Italian philosopher on the "left" of Heidegger is Giorgio Agamben. Agamben's articulation of biopolitics is informed by ontological and aesthetic issues which can be traced back to Heidegger's discussion of potentiality as the renunciation or suspension of Being. As we now know this renunciation does not give Being up, it rather clings to Being by thinking of a higher ontological event.

It is interesting to remember here that in Heidegger, too, we encounter the notion of nakedness (*die Nacktheit*) interpreted as the moment where things are reclaimed to their wordliness, that is, to their state before the world (Heidegger, 1985: 91). For Heidegger, nakedness is life as such, phenomenologically pure and unadulterated. Nakedness is the necessary step towards undergoing a higher experience of the world. It is in this sense that renunciation and destruction, unconcealment and truth (*aletheia*) might also be seen as means towards an experience of life as such.

Whoever is familiar with Agamben's thought will immediately recognize strong semantic similarities. Nakedness is also part of Agamben's vocabulary; and so are potentiality, destruction and suspension. What changes, though, is that in Agamben nakedness is not necessarily positive. In fact, within the context of modern politics and society the most vulnerable moments of life are inscribed in nakedness. According to Agamben nakedness is the life that can be killed with impunity (*Homo Sacer*, [1995] 1998). A naked life is a life that lacks juridical rights and that can therefore be treated by suspending the law, as in cases of emergencies (*The State of Exception*, [2003] 2005). Whereas for Heidegger naked life is the apex of the philosophical endeavour, for Agamben is a dangerous state between life and non-life, the moment when sovereignty abuses sovereignty by simultaneously retaining juridical legitimacy.

That is, of course, if we look at naked life from the perspective of biopolitics. And yet, biopolitics is only a recent concern of Agamben, starting from *Homo sacer* in 1995. Up to *the Coming Community* [1990] (1993) the discussion of nakedness articulated around the coextensive terms of suchness, suspension and destruction retains the affirmative characteristics that it has in Heidegger. In *Infancy and History* [1978] (1993), for instance, Agamben reads the significant and revolutionary experiences of modern literature through the lens of destruction, whose relations to Heidegger's destruction are far from being casual. In *Language and Death* [1982] (1991), Agamben investigates language, especially poetic language, whose similarities with Heidegger's notion of experiencing language as language are explicitly detailed and discussed. In *The Coming Community*, suchness becomes the starting point for a re-evaluation of identity and community through questioning a set of determining conditions of belonging.

Throughout the 1980s, Agamben's significant discussion of potentiality is based on a lucid and original analysis of renunciation,

climaxing with his important essay on Melville's *Bartleby*, "Bartleby, or on Contingency" (Agamben, 1999).

It is in a more recent book, *The Open* [2002] (2004), that the affirmative and negative approaches to nakedness appear to coalesce in an interesting as well as puzzling way. What Agamben attempts in *The Open* is to go further in his discussion of naked life by investigating the process through which life as such might be brought about. *The Open* is a further stage needed to clarify to Agamben's readers (and perhaps to himself too) the event of naked life together with its political and ontological implications. When is it, Agamben asks, that human life meets and encounters animal life? But most importantly, and this time we are asking the question, does this moment of indistinction and indeterminacy equate with nakedness? Agamben does not posit nor answer the second question. However, and given the philosophical context in which *The Open* is written and responds to, I believe that this question is not only pertinent but also necessary. Agamben's answer to the first question is that the indistinction human/animal is brought about by undergoing an experience of the open, whose definition and discussion revolves around Heidegger's famous lectures of the late 1940's, later included in the volume *Parmenides* (1992).

7.

In those lectures Heidegger states his concept of the open in relation to and against Rilke's poetisation of it in the eight *Duino Elegy*. For Heidegger, Man is in the open – which also means face to face with Being – when Man frees himself from reified and constructed possibilities in order to come closer to the original possibility, which in this renunciation remains near despite its spatial and temporal remoteness. Boredom, argues Heidegger, is one instance in which this experience might take place. In those instances, that is, in which life loses its conventionality and opens itself to a possibility of worldiness, and life as such. Agamben adheres closely to Heidegger's open, locating the area of indeterminacy between humans and animals in the space of boredom. Agamben also calls this space the zone of *désœuvrement* (unemployment/worklessness), borrowing a term coined by Maurice Blanchot. In other words, Agamben appears to use two affirmative philosophical processes, Heidegger's and Blanchot's – we will come to Blanchot's work shortly – to describe an event of great vulnerability and danger.

Things, however, are not really that simple. At the end of *The Open* this event of indeterminacy is cited as a possible alternative to the aporia

of contemporary political life, and to those enacted by the anthropological machine (that is, the distinction between humans and animals on which humanity has been predicated upon).

It is here that one might come to see through Agamben's philosophical project. If on the one hand Agamben is tracing the negativity of naked life in the context of current society and politics – which are based on the institutionalisation and preservation of the anthropological machine – on the other he is positing the positive potentiality of naked life in the context of a society and of a politics that have done away with the anthropological machine. In this society life as such might no longer be seen as vulnerable and lawless; it might have regained, instead, a truer and original state.

8.

It is hard to conceptualise, let alone imagine, what kind of society this might be. The problem is compounded by Agamben's conspicuous silence on this matter. He might retort that the task of philosophy is not so much that of giving answers as that of generating questions. And yet this philosophical stance – which again resembles very much the one taken by Heidegger – leaves Agamben's philosophy vulnerable to similar criticism as those articulated with regard to Heidegger's. Let us take for instance the intelligent and balanced book, *Heidegger's Estrangements: Language, Truth, and Poetry in the Later Writing*, by Gerald Bruns. Towards the end of Bruns' book we find this comment, which is also a methodological reservation, that might be easily extracted to describe Agamben's work:

The folly of trying to follow closely Heidegger's thinking [...] comes out very forcefully when you try to stop, because there is no natural stopping place, no place of arrival where everything falls into place and you can say, 'Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over.' Instead, the movement you get into is that of going back over what has been said in order to pick up on what is missing or what has been left out of account. So you are always starting over with something familiar, and then going astray as you try to finish or complete what you think you have in hand. This is why, after a while, repetition and confusion are likely to appear the distinctive features of anything you have to say about Heidegger (Bruns, 1989: 174).

One way to approach the gaps left behind by individual philosophers is to compare and contrast them with other thinkers, whose work resonates with similar concerns. It is in this sense that Agamben's work might also be used to fill gaps in Heidegger's thought and vice-versa. The same applies to the work of Maurice Blanchot, whose famous pauses and

silences are, to a great extent, informed by Heidegger's philosophy, and whose affirmative passivity can at once be reconnected with Heidegger's existentialism, but also employed to supplement Agamben's articulation of suspension.

9.

In Blanchot *désœuvrement* is synonymous with renunciation. This is certainly the way in which Agamben appears to understand it. Blanchot's worklessness is at once action and no-action. Its emergence decrees an insubordination, a stop a "suspension" in which "society falls apart completely. The law collapses: for an instant there is innocence; history is interrupted" (Holland, 1995: 250). The similarities between Agamben and Blanchot are obvious, as obvious is the way they have arrived at this postulation by following Heidegger beyond Heidegger. The stop Blanchot refers to is something that must be learned and enacted deliberately. Should this action which refuses action be embraced by the community, then the law will collapse and history (the anthropological machine) will grind to a halt. Innocence, for which one could very well replaced nakedness, will emerge and triumph.

The 1960s, and also a section of the Italian *operaismo* in the 1960s/1970s were an explicit attempt to bring about a dramatic change in society by way of renouncing accepted values and norms. While innocence was at the core of the hippy movement, insubordination as political and social struggle was the driving force of theoretical and practical activism in Italy. Let us think for instance of the writing of Mario Tronti and Antonio Negri in the 1960/1970s. Their idea of politics was nothing other than a politics of withdrawal. On this point is worth quoting at length from an essay by Brett Neilson:

The fundamental move of these Marxist intellectuals whose work provided the theoretical backbone for a whole generation of protest movements in Italy, was to reverse the classical relationship between labour and capital. By arguing that capital is essentially a social power that requires productive labour, and which evolves through a series of attempts to control or co-opt workers, they introduced the notion that the withdrawal of labour and/or refusal to collaborate with capital in the organization of labour (e.g., by making demands that could not be possibly be met) would function to destroy the capitalist system. And, in so doing, they invented a new form of politics that considered the denial of action or, as Tronti (1966) famously called it, "the strategy of refusal." (2006: 131-132).

It is worth pausing on the example that Neilson uses to exemplify the “strategy of refusal”. This could be achieved, Neilson says, by “making demands that could not possibly be met”. There are analogies between “demands that cannot possibly be met”, and the discussion of renunciation as seen in Heidegger, Agamben and Blanchot. But while for Heidegger renunciation is the path towards the freedom to experience language as language, for Tronti renunciation is the path towards political empowerment, and while in Heidegger renunciation remains a solipsistic and almost mystical experience, in Tronti it becomes a collective process of political and social affirmation. What about Blanchot?

10.

In *The Writing of the Disaster* [1980] (1986) Blanchot distinguishes between two types of refusal or renunciation. The first he calls a deliberate and voluntary refusal, which “expresses a decision”. This refusal, according to Blanchot, “does not yet allow separation from the power of consciousness” (Blanchot, 1986: 17). Next to this conscious refusal Blanchot speaks of a refusal “which is not so much a denial as, more than that, an abdication” (ibid.). The ultimate example of this latter refusal is *Bartleby*. Blanchot states that *Bartleby*’s abdication is in reality a “relinquishment of identity” (ibid.), leading to a loss of being and thought. With *Bartleby*, intimates Blanchot, “we have fallen out of being, outside where, immobile, proceeding with a slow and even step, destroyed men come and go” (ibid.).

Blanchot’s distinction is of considerable significance. Firstly it tells us that renunciation can be either positive affirmation (an example of which might be *operaismo*) or passive nakedness (*Bartleby*). Secondly, it appears to announce a problem that might very well be the central one engaging Agamben’s thought; that is, renunciation as consciousness and renunciation as nakedness. While in the first instance renunciation works within the context and the framework of the status quo in order to subvert it, in the second one renunciation abdicates, insubordinate, yet deferent to the status quo. It is in this sense that the act of conscious renunciation might destabilize society and history (the anthropological machine), and yet retain it as its guiding principle. The other possibility (*Bartleby*), is abdication as the bringing forward of an existence without being, whose individual sacrifice might be born out only at the level of the individual, like in the case of *Bartleby* and his employer.

Clearly, Agamben operates within a different contextual framework. He is aware that acts of conscious renunciation, as those experienced in

the 1960s and the 1970s, are improbable in today's society, given the deep structural and technological changes undergone in the last thirty years. Abdication of life, the other side of the coin, is precisely what Agamben regards as the extreme danger of contemporary societies, and the very cause for the implementation and success of the state of exception.

What is left to think is a nakedness that does not abdicate, but which, through a suspension of history, introduces not so much, and not only a political struggle, as an ethical and philosophical turn the outcome of which might as well fall into a mystical and messianic heap or into constructive ethical practices, as, for instance, those announced by Gianni Vattimo in his essay "Heidegger and the Philosophy of Emancipation".

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THE INTERPRETATION OF *DA-SEIN* AS A TRANSFORMATIVE, POETIC AND ETHICAL BEING

JANE MUMMERY

[M]any times, even ad nauseam, we pointed out that this being qua *Dasein* is always already with others and always already with beings not of *Dasein*'s nature (Heidegger, 1984: 19).

As we all know from Heidegger's writing, we are not meant to translate *Da-sein* as the traditional metaphysical self-present and self-knowing subject – an autonomous being that is both just one entity among others, but able to comprehensively know these others. Such a subject, Heidegger thinks, is a dream left to us by the great metaphysical narratives. Furthermore, the being of such a subject is not what any of us feel when we consider ourselves and our actual being. In contrast, *Da-sein*, Heidegger suggests, is what we do feel, a sense of “there-being” (if we are literal in our translation) disclosed always and already in terms of our factual being-in-the-world, a sense that is also strongly tied up with our feeling of having a world.¹ As he stresses, “*Da-sein* is not also extant among things with the difference merely that it apprehends them. Instead the *Da-sein* exists in the manner of Being-in-the-world, and this basic determination of its existence is the presupposition for being able to apprehend anything at all” (Heidegger, 1982: 164). That is, *Da-sein* is not at all in the world as a chair is in a house – and remember here also that Heidegger stresses, on several occasions, that *Da-sein* is not simply a “what”.² Rather, Heidegger means that *Da-sein*'s experience of itself and

¹ As Frederick Olafson puts it, *Da-sein* is “the kind of entity that eksists in the sense that it transcends its own spatiotemporal envelope and can thus be said not only to be in but to *have* a world” (Olafson, 1998: 97).

² Heidegger writes in *History of the Concept of Time* that “When we ask about this entity, the *Dasein*, we must at least ask, Who is this entity?, and not, What is this entity?” (Heidegger, 1992: 237).

the world always takes place from a situatedness within, which is also a disclosure of, the world. Overall, Heidegger argues that *Da-sein* is our way of being, a way that is not separable from the world, instead marking a “disclosive weddedness to the world” (Thiele, 1995: 45).

Exploring some of the implications of Heidegger’s depiction of *Da-sein* is thus the aim of this paper. To begin with, as I will demonstrate, *Da-sein*’s way of being, in escaping categorization in terms of any particular ‘what’, points instead to a ‘how’ and an open and transformative potentiality, a potentiality that is best exemplified by a certain mode of being-with. This, however, has implications broader than just the transformation of our understanding of *Da-sein*’s way of being-in-the-world. Specifically, I suggest that it is this understanding of *Da-sein*’s potentiality that not only mirrors but underpins and enables Heidegger’s later delineations of the ethical and aesthetic potentiality of thinking itself. Like *Da-sein*, or perhaps due to *Da-sein*, thinking is depicted as being able to escape its traditional or common forms and constraints. These possibilities, however, raise in their turn a series of important questions with regard to the very possibility of thinking – in particular, questions concerning whether we do in fact need to dwell in order to think. Such questions, as I will show, have some interesting implications with regard to the possibility and efficacy of ethical thinking.³

***Da-sein* plus anxiety equals potentiality and transformation**

This designation Dasein ... does not signify a what. The entity is not distinguished by its what, like a chair in contrast to a house. Rather this designation in its own way expresses the way to be (Heidegger, 1992: 153).

Given, then, that it “does not signify a what”, *Da-sein*, as Heidegger makes clear, stands for a “potentiality-for-Being” (Heidegger, 1995a: 275;

³ Of course, in using the Heideggerian project to assess ethical thinking, I am going against the tenor of Heidegger’s own argument. As Silvia Benso puts it, it is “well known” that Heidegger saw his thought as needing to be “free of any practical concern” (Benso, 1994: 159). In Heidegger’s words, his thinking – given that it is of Being rather than beings – “has no result. It has no effect. It satisfies its essence in that it is” (Heidegger, 1998: 272). Nonetheless, as a range of thinkers have stressed, Heidegger’s project has important implications for attempts to develop non-systematised ethics (see, for instance, Benso, 1994; Caputo, 1993a; Gasché, 2000; Hodge, 1995; Lewis, 2005; Olafson, 1998).

Heidegger, 1996: 214). It is, Heidegger thinks, “essential to the basic constitution of Dasein that there is *constantly something to be settled*” (Heidegger, 1995a: 279; Heidegger, 1996: 219). Certainly *Da-sein* may not always be aware of or attentive to this potentiality, and Heidegger tells us that when this is the case *Da-sein* has fallen into the comfort and tranquility of *inauthenticity*. In this mode of being-in-the-world, *Da-sein* forgets about its own always present potentiality, and lets itself be determined and understood in terms of its everyday involvements and absorption with others and things. As Heidegger puts it:

This Being-with-one-another dissolves one’s own Dasein completely into the kind of Being of “the Others” [...]. We take pleasure and enjoy ourselves as *they* [*man*] take pleasure; we read, see, and judge about literature and art as *they* see and judge; likewise we shrink back from the “great mass” as *they* shrink back; we find “shocking” what *they* find shocking. The “they” [...] prescribes the kind of Being of [*Da-sein*’s] everydayness. (Heidegger, 1995a: 164; Heidegger, 1996: 119).

Inauthentic *Da-sein*, in other words, realizes itself in terms of the common or public world of everydayness. Its mode of being is given and accepted, and is seemingly fixed, changing only under the apparently authoritative influence of the “they”. As Heidegger puts it, in this mode of being the “they” “supplies the answer to the question of the ‘*who*’ of everyday Dasein”, and has in effect “disburdened” *Da-sein* of its ownmost being (Heidegger, 1995a: 165-166; Heidegger, 1996: 120).

Despite the very real attractions of the ‘they’ and the everyday world, however, *Da-sein* can of course be brought back to an awareness of its own actually undiminished potentiality-for-being – an awareness Heidegger calls an *authentic* mode of being (Heidegger, 1995a: 232; Heidegger, 1996: 187)⁴. Now Heidegger suggests that this coming to such an awareness – what he elsewhere calls an attunement of *Da-sein* – can best be enabled by *Da-sein*’s experiencing of such moods as anxiety (in *Being and Time*) and boredom (in *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*). In other words, such moods can disclose *Da-sein* to itself as itself. Now what this really means is that such moods as anxiety and boredom can disclose in *Da-sein* a certain unease and sense of uncanniness with regards to its own being-in-the-world. In experiencing such moods, *Da-sein* finds

⁴ It is important to realize that Heidegger is not making value judgements with regards to the modes of being-in-the-world of authenticity and inauthenticity. Indeed, it is fair to say that inauthenticity and authenticity simply describe whether *Da-sein*’s life is its own in any real sense. That is, they are descriptive rather than prescriptive terms.

it difficult to maintain itself comfortably in the “they”. What is normally part of *Da-sein*’s world, and important to it, seems to no longer be so. And this means that the experiencing of anxiety and boredom can disclose to *Da-sein* a certain “not-at-homeness” in its world as part of the “they” as well as with itself (Heidegger, 1995a: 234; Heidegger, 1996: 177). Anxiety and/or boredom thus mark the scene of *Da-sein*’s being transformed from thinking that it’s part of the “they” to conducting itself into its “there” of potentiality – a “there” that Heidegger elsewhere describes as being essentially open, “transcendent” and “ec-static” (see Heidegger, 1982: 298, 267).⁵

This, however, is only part of the story of *Da-sein*’s recognition of its ownmost potentiality. The other key aspect that needs clarification is that of *Da-sein*’s constitution as a being-with. For a start Heidegger, as we know, denies from the very outset that *Da-sein* describes that independent metaphysical subject who is “encapsulated within itself” (Heidegger, 1992: 243). *Da-sein*, rather, as a being-in-the-world is necessarily a being-with – a being-with not only things in the world, but other *Da-seins*: “the world of Dasein is a *with-world* [*Mitwelt*], Being-in is *Being-with-others*” (Heidegger, 1995a: 155; Heidegger, 1996: 112). Now what is important to note here is that *Da-sein*’s mode of being-with works, in effect, as a form of world disclosure. How we understand ourselves as being-with, whether it’s with other *Da-seins* or other entities or things, is constitutively a depiction of how we see the world, and ourselves as in the world. Now the transformative potentiality of this can best be understood with reference to the way Heidegger describes *Da-sein*’s modes of being-with in terms of *techne*. On the one hand, Heidegger says that *techne* typically unfolds as *Da-sein*’s objectifying and dominating relation with the world – where its disclosure of the world is one of understanding and enframing (*Ge-stell*) the world in terms of its use-value. This calculative mode of being-with is thus one of *Da-sein* readying the world and things – and perhaps even ourselves and others – for technical manipulation, seeing everything thereby as a “standing-reserve” (Heidegger, 1977: 17).⁶ In this mode of

⁵ “The term ‘ecstatic’ has nothing to do with ecstatic states of mind and the like. The common Greek expression *ekstatikon* means stepping-outside-self. It is affiliated with the term ‘existence’. It is with this ecstatic character that we interpret existence” (Heidegger, 1982: 267). Heidegger also designates this ecstatic stepping-beyond as the non-absolute transcendence constitutive of *Da-sein*’s existence as *Da-sein*: “the being that we ourselves in each case are, the Dasein, is the *transcendent*” (Heidegger, 1982: 298; cf. Heidegger, 1998: 108).

⁶ Heidegger suggests this in his infamous comparison of the business of concentration camps with that of agriculture: “agriculture is now a motorized food

being-with, Heidegger states, for example, that “even the Rhine itself appears as something at our command [...] the river is dammed up into the power plant. What the river is now, [is] namely, a water power supplier” (Heidegger, 1977: 16).

Similarly, we can see this sort of model of being-with played out in *Da-sein*’s inauthentic relationship with the “they”. Specifically, the “they” are also perceived by an inauthentic *Da-sein* in terms of their use-value. The “they”, after all, are useful insofar as they provide an answer to the question of *Da-sein*’s being. The “they” frames *Da-sein*, keeping it from anxiety and/or boredom, keeping it busy and involved and without the chance of reflecting, except complacently, upon its being-in-the-world. As Heidegger puts it, the “supposition of the ‘they’ that one is leading [...] a full and genuine ‘life’, brings Dasein a *tranquility*” (Heidegger, 1995a: 222; Heidegger, 1996: 166). *Da-sein* is as such reassured by simply being-with the “they”. Further, such being-with the “they” provides *Da-sein* with a sense of certainty with regards to how to approach and understand everything and everyone else. Through “idle talk”⁷, in particular, *Da-sein* sees itself as gaining a general understanding of everything, an understanding that is authoritative simply because it is commonplace.

Nevertheless, in contrast to this mode of being-with that perceives the world and things in terms of their possible usages, Heidegger says that *Da-sein* can also disclose the world by “dwelling” in it, where dwelling in no way implies ownership or control. Rather it suggests a transformative relation with the world, others, and things. In other words, insofar as it dwells, *Da-sein* is in the world differently. Not only does dwelling disclose the world differently, but it changes the way in which *Da-sein* as being-with is with others. This mode of being-with is also described by Heidegger as a matter of *ethos*, where *ethos* both describes and suggests a transformation of “the open region in which the human being dwells” (Heidegger, 1998: 269). *Ethos*, we could say, is and suggests relations of “releasement” and “letting be” (*Gelassenheit*)⁸, where *Da-sein* is able to

industry – in essence the same as the manufacturing of corpses in gas chambers and the extermination camps, the same as the blockading and starving of nations, the same as the manufacture of atom bombs” (cited in Neske & Kettering, 1990).

⁷ In *Being and Time* Heidegger describes three of the commonplace aspects of *Da-sein*’s everyday being-with the “they”: idle talk, curiosity, and ambiguity. These different aspects all comprise and sustain *Da-sein*’s inauthentic and comfortable being-in-the-world. (See Heidegger, 1995a: sections 35-37).

⁸ For an interesting discussion of the relation of *Gelassenheit* and *ethos*, see Caputo’s *Against Ethics*. Here he argues for *Gelassenheit* as the basis of an “ethics of dissemination, a veritable postmodern ethics” (Caputo, 1993: 1).

“[l]et the Others who are with it ‘be’ in their ownmost potentiality-for-Being, and to co-disclose this potentiality in the solicitude which leaps forth and liberates” (Heidegger, 1995a: 344; Heidegger, 1996: 274). In this case, then, *Da-sein*’s being-with marks a disclosure of the world in terms of a possible mode of belonging together that does not desire or descend into either unification or mastery. That is, such a dwelling being-in-the-world is a recognition of the point that *Da-sein*’s own needs and interests are not, in fact, necessarily paramount. The modesty of this form of world disclosure is additionally stressed by Heidegger when he describes this being-in-the-world in terms of the belonging together of the fourfold – a.k.a. the “earth and sky, divinities and mortals” (Heidegger, 1971: 149) – where what matters is first *Da-sein*’s recognition of itself as not being “the lord of beings” (Heidegger, 1998: 260), and, second, *Da-sein*’s recognition of the importance of letting things be. Dwelling, then, itself marks a significant transformation of *Da-sein*’s mode of being-with, where things, others and the world – and, of course, *Da-sein*’s own being – cannot simply be delineated in terms of use-value.

All of this, however, encompasses and implies far more than simply reminding us of the range of worldly possibilities open to *Da-sein*. Certainly this outline of our possible depictions of the relation between self and other, along with Heidegger’s subsequent affirmation of an authentic being-with, can be recognized in any number of self-help books, but Heidegger is making some much more basic points here. For a start, we need to remember that this possibility of dwelling is inextricable from *Da-sein*’s potential for authenticity. *Da-sein* as dweller in the world is the *Da-sein* who resolutely chooses itself, “deciding for a potentiality-for-Being, and making this decision from one’s own self” (Heidegger, 1995a: 313; Heidegger, 1996: 248). That is, *Da-sein* as dweller is the *Da-sein* who withdraws from absorption in the they, thereby demonstrating that the possibility of dwelling, and thereby of ethos, is tied to that of authenticity. More on this later. The second basic point that Heidegger makes here is to remind us that the way we understand *Da-sein* to be will also give us a picture of how we expect thinking to be. Indeed, I would suggest that it is *Da-sein*’s possible transformative attunement to its own potentiality through anxiety or boredom that makes Heidegger’s ongoing project re the transformation of philosophy and thinking itself possible, a transformation that can furthermore be seen to have implications for ethical and aesthetic thinking. The question, however, is how exactly?

The being-with of interpretation: the ethical transformation of philosophy

[I]f heretofore the reigning essence of thinking has been that transcendental-horizonal re-presenting from which releasement [...] releases itself; then thinking changes in [this] releasement from such re-presenting to waiting upon that-which-regions (Heidegger, 1966: 74).

The proposed transformation of *Da-sein* thus brings us to Heidegger's transformation of thinking, where, just like *Da-sein*'s way of being, thinking is depicted as being able to be opened to a much greater potentiality than typically anticipated. Now thinking – as Heidegger sets it out – is, as I've already mentioned in reference to *Da-sein*'s own modes of thinking, typically seen as possessing a strong calculative element. And this means that it has a tendency to disclose everything in the world in terms of some already accepted principle or formula. This is, of course, exemplified by our everyday thinking – whether this is economic rationalist, scientific, pseudo-scientific, and so on – but Heidegger argues that it also encompasses the thinking of the philosophical – and here read metaphysical – tradition. After all, as Heidegger stresses, when we consider in philosophy what he calls the “fundamental metaphysical positions”, our tendency is to do so “according to the various doctrines and propositions expressed in them” (Heidegger, 1991: 191). And this, in effect, closes this thinking down. Metaphysics, he argues, is a “transcendental-horizonal re-presenting” where the aim is to ground, delimit and enframe everything that is in a particular way (Heidegger, 1966: 74). In other words, metaphysics – and by this we include every possible metaphysical system – works as a type of ordering, a calculation that makes sense of things for us but which forgets to question its own grounds. And this, Heidegger says, means that metaphysics basically forgets that which is “most worthy of thought” (Heidegger, 1969: 55).

Because of this, then, Heidegger's proposed transformation of thinking is initially set out in terms of his countering of metaphysics – a countering he terms “interpretation”. Indeed, as he put it in his “Der Spiegel interview”, his “whole work [...] has been mainly simply an interpretation of western philosophy” (Heidegger, 1990: 59). However, it's important to stress that Heidegger here understands interpretation to be far more than just a reprisal or reiteration within given and accepted limits. At the same time though, it in no way means the absolute rejection or overcoming of the tradition, a point that Heidegger is also keen to stress, telling us that to expect or want this is grotesque. In his words:

Here something else takes place than a mere restoration of metaphysics. Besides, there is no restoration which could merely accept something handed down to it, as someone gathers the apples which have fallen from the tree. Every restoration is an interpretation of metaphysics. Whoever believes that he [sic] can penetrate and follow metaphysical questions more clearly today in the entirety of their nature and history, should, since he likes to feel so superior as he moves in clear regions, consider one day whence he has taken the light to enable him see more clearly. It is hardly possible to surpass the grotesqueness of proclaiming my attempts at thinking as smashing metaphysics to bits and of sojourning at the same time, with the help of those attempts, on paths of thinking and in conceptions which have been derived – I do not say, to which one is indebted – from that alleged demolition (Heidegger, 1958: 91, 93).

Interpretation thus effects a radicalizing of that which it engages with, unfolding as a “reciprocative rejoinder to” the philosophical tradition (Heidegger, 1995a: 438; Heidegger, 1996: 353). It is thus no new thing to assert that Heidegger’s conception of interpretation is inextricable from processes of both repetition and destruction, although we do of course need to remember that Heideggerian destruction is much more of a transforming – a making strange – of that which it engages with than a discarding of it⁹. Interpretation, then, is essentially dialogic, but dialogic in a way that is not synthetically dialectical, with Heidegger stressing that he sees his work as a series of “thinking conversations” (Heidegger, 1969: 45) with various of the thinkers of the philosophical tradition¹⁰. Furthermore, despite the risk of being “accused of disdain for all sound

⁹ Heidegger stresses that the aim of his *destruktion* is positive (see Heidegger, 1995a: 44; Heidegger, 1996: 20). This point is reiterated by Caputo, who writes: “The recovery of the meaning of Dasein, and ultimately of Being itself, cannot be effected without deconstructive violence, even as deconstructive violence is not to be undertaken except in the service of a positive program of retrieval” (Caputo, 1987: 65). Although I concur with Caputo’s point here, there is of course an oft-cited problem with describing Heidegger’s notion of *destruktion* as a form of (Derridean) deconstruction which has to do with what each of these terms makes possible: *destruktion*, a sort of gathering or enabling; deconstruction, more of a disabling. Derrida, of course, discusses this issue in his *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*.

¹⁰ Hodge has argued that Heidegger’s readings of the philosophical tradition “demonstrate the contribution of these previous thinkers, then show their limitations and then seek to break elements of their work free to be used in the [his] new formation. It is the overriding importance of developing this new form of thinking which for Heidegger justifies his impositions onto the texts of Kant, of Leibniz, or indeed Aristotle” (Hodge, 1995: 149).

reason” (Heidegger, 1958: 79), Heideggerian interpretation as such thinking conversation is exemplified by an oft-stated lack of interest in finding or promoting any particular answer (Heidegger, 1991: 192). To put this otherwise, interpretation – when depicted this way – marks simply an opening – indeed an overcoming – of the usual constraints and expectations of thinking.

Now there is a second way that we can understand interpretation, and this is as a type of “letting-be” which has the potential to further suggest a radical transformation of thinking itself. More specifically, interpretation might suggest that calculative and/or metaphysical thinking can become, when questioned in a particular way, thinking conversations. Such latter thinking, as Heidegger describes, is not only a radicalizing destruction but perhaps also a listening and waiting that remains responsive to the other. Such thinking would thereby be essentially a dwelling, but a dwelling that is open both to metaphysics and to what metaphysics forgot. Further, we could also see this dwelling as an authentic or ethical being-with in its concern to first show and second sustain the potentiality and openness of both what it interprets and its relation with what it interprets.

Interpretation, in other words, has the potential to open itself up as a dwelling in the same way that *Da-sein* does with regards to its being-with the world, things, itself and others. And it is in clarifying this notion that Heidegger comes to talk of this thinking as meditative and poetic – that is, thinking as a dwelling comportment with the world, exemplified by *Da-sein*’s non-totalising, non-metaphysical disclosure of the interplay of the earth and sky, divinities and mortals – a.k.a. the fourfold. Indeed, Heidegger comes to describe this notion of thinking/dwelling in terms of *Da-sein*’s being simply a “shepherd” – as opposed to, say, a director – of this interplay (see, for example, his “Letter on Humanism”: Heidegger, 1998: 252). It is this shift in the depiction of thinking – from calculation and use-value to dwelling and letting-be – that is important here. After all, as Heidegger claims elsewhere, “If releasement toward things and openness to the mystery awaken within us, then we should arrive at a path that will lead to a new ground” for thinking (Heidegger, 1966: 56-7).

Heidegger, of course, finds this “new ground” in poetic and meditative thinking, the thinking that he sees Hölderlin or Rilke, say, as both engaging in themselves and engaging us in when we come to their work. As such he argues that “the letting happen of the advent of the truth of what is, is [...] *essentially poetry*” (Heidegger, 1971: 72). We do, however, have to remember here that Heidegger is primarily concerned not with poetry itself but with a certain “poetic character of thinking” (Heidegger, 1971: 12), and this, as Ziarek puts it, concerns that “rigour of

language that would preserve or translate into our discourses its world-disclosive properties as opposed to its objectifying tendencies” (Ziarek, 1995: 384). Poetic thinking, in other words, is disclosive thinking, able to go beyond the metaphysical methodology of enframing things to one of releasing them, letting them be.

And it is this that reminds us again that these conceptions of questioning and dialogic interpretation, and poetic and meditative thinking, are very much inextricably tied up with *Da-sein*’s actual being-in-the-world¹¹. For a start Heidegger emphasizes that it is only through an “analytic of the Dasein” (Heidegger, 1995a: 37; Heidegger, 1996: 14) that the problematic of philosophical questioning *can* be reopened as a question and re-attuned from calculative to meditative thinking – philosophical questioning, after all, only has meaning as a “human activity” (Heidegger, 1995b: 19). To put this another way, we could say that the horizon of the problematic of philosophical questioning can necessarily only be *Da-sein* itself. And, further, that the only way to develop this problematic “*still more* radically”, and to let these “ancient fundamental questions spring forth anew”, is to ground it and them in a rethought human existence (Heidegger, 1995b: 359, 350). This point is, I think, also demonstrated by Heidegger’s realization of the necessary interconnectedness of the “what” and the “how” of his methodology. As he puts it in his conversations with Nietzsche:

Our reflections make it clear that in thinking [...] *what* is thought cannot be detached from the *way in which* it is thought. The *what* is itself defined by the *how*, and, reciprocally, the *how* by the *what* (Heidegger, 1991: 119).

Now this, I suggest, makes it clear that Heidegger’s objective in transforming philosophical thinking – his “what” – is absolutely inextricable from the “how” of human existence, where existence can only mean *Da-sein*’s actual modes of being in and with the world. After all, as Heidegger has stated, “the question of being” – and this of course is the guiding question of his whole project – is in itself, correctly understood, “the question of man” (1984: 17).¹²

¹¹ For instance, note how Heidegger draws on *Da-sein*’s experiences of facticity in his essays in *Poetry, Language, Thought*.

¹² In full, Heidegger writes: “[T]he question of being, is in itself, correctly understood, the *question of man*. Yet, the important thing is to raise the question of man in view of the problem of being [...]. This fundamental philosophical question about man remains *prior* to every psychology, anthropology, and characterology, but also prior to all ethics and sociology” (Heidegger, 1984: 17, my italics).

This has some interesting implications. Is Heidegger suggesting here that the transformative potential inherent in *Da-sein's* attuned and authentic being-with – whether considered in terms of *Da-sein's* being-with things, itself, others or the world – actually enables the transformative potential inherent both in his depiction of interpretation as “thinking conversation”, and in his later conceptions of ethical and/or poetic thinking? Do we need to be authentically and resolutely attuned to our ownmost potentiality in order to even embark on a bona fide thinking conversation? Is the methodology and practice of a dialogic interpretation the inevitable result of our acceptance of our open potentiality? Do we need to dwell in order to really think, let alone to think ethically? (And of course when we try and think these through in terms of Heidegger himself we soon hit problems with regards to his infamous being-with Nazism.) It is these questions, then, that I want to explore for the remainder of this paper.

Thinking equals dwelling: some implications

If the name “ethics”, in keeping with the basic meaning of the word *ἠθικός*, should now say that ethics ponders the abode of the human being, then that thinking which thinks the truth of being as the primordial element of the human being, as one who *eksists*, is in itself originary ethics (Heidegger, 1998: 271).

For a start, as the above quote suggests, Heidegger sees ethics quite differently to what we commonly associate with ethical thinking. Most simply, he describes the usual understanding of ethics as just one more example of calculative thinking, specifically concerned with prescribing and calculating rules for living, mores, and appropriate levels of praise and blame. Such calculations, he argues, are dissociated from what really matters which is *ethos*, and *Da-sein's* potential for being-in-the-world in terms of dwelling and letting be. Finally, of course, Heidegger suggests that this potential for dwelling is itself played out in meditative and poetic thinking, thinking which can also be seen as a sort of revitalized ethical thinking highlighting the practices of letting be, releasement, and waiting. It is at this point, however, that I want to go back to an issue I flagged earlier, that of the relation between dwelling, *ethos*, ethical thinking, and *Da-sein's* authenticity. That is, is Heidegger suggesting that only authentic *Da-sein* can dwell and think ethically? And if so, is this problematic?

To begin with, I would argue that Heidegger does seem to quite explicitly connect authenticity with *ethos*, dwelling and thinking. For instance, in his rectoral address of 1933, “The Self-Assertion of the

German University” (1985), he describes the thinker (*Führer*)¹³ in such a way as to also draw upon his description of authentic *Da-sein* in *Being and Time*¹⁴. That is, in both the rectoral address and *Being and Time*, a key mode of being for both the *Führer* and authentic *Da-sein* is “resoluteness” (*Entschlossenheit*), described by Heidegger as the “authentic Being-one’s-Self” (Heidegger, 1995a: 344; Heidegger, 1996: 274). More specifically, resoluteness stands for the actual committed choosing (and rechoosing, as this is never a final choice) of authenticity and of the concurrent withdrawal from absorption and lostness in the they. It is resoluteness, then, that enables the bringing of “the Self right into its current concerned Being-alongside what is ready-to-hand, and pushes it into solicitous Being with Others” (Heidegger, 1995a: 344; Heidegger, 1996: 274). In other words, resoluteness also describes and enables *Da-sein*’s possibilities for dwelling and thinking.

The thinker as dweller, then, is constitutively the *Da-sein* of resolute authenticity, a mode of being that in turn makes possible thinking conversation and a revitalized ethics. The trouble here, though, is that Heidegger very explicitly does not place any moral value on *Da-sein* being authentic as opposed to inauthentic. There is, as Vadén notes, “no ‘should’ in authenticity” (Vadén, 2004: 413). Now although this lack of imperative for authenticity is important for Heidegger’s attempt to describe *Da-sein*’s actual being, it seems rather problematic when we come to the possibility and function of ethical thinking. That is, if we accept the connection between authenticity and dwelling as thinking, ethical thinking is also not something to be preferred and promoted over calculative thinking. Surely though ethical thinking, by definition, should be preferred over other non-ethical modes. In addition, Heidegger himself most certainly does seem to come down on the side of thinking as dwelling. He suggests, in fact, that preparing for and enabling this latter form of thinking is itself the “task” of thinking (Heidegger, 1993: 436; cf. Heidegger, 1998: 276). How then should these issues be resolved?

To begin with, we need to remember Heidegger’s refashioning of ethics. Basically, as we have seen, he substitutes ethos for ethics – dwelling disclosure for prescriptions and mores. And this marks a shift from what we could call an ontical ethics to an ontological – or, in

¹³ Note that whilst Heidegger did of course famously identify this figure of thinker with a determined historical person, such identification is not, in fact, necessary or inevitable.

¹⁴ Benso makes this point clearly in ‘On the Way to an Ontological Ethics’ (see Benso, 1994: 165-166).

Heidegger's words, "originary" (Heidegger, 1998: 271) – ethics. Now, with regards to how to resolve the paradox noted above, what this means is that instead of ethics standing for a system telling *Da-sein* how to behave, it stands for *how Da-sein* actually *is*. That is, ethos, like authenticity, is itself simply a description of *Da-sein*'s being, allowing us to say that there is also no "should" in ethos. Nevertheless, Heidegger would argue that the methodology of thinking tied up with ethos is preferable to that of calculative thinking because ethos is itself a better description of *Da-sein*. That is, whilst inauthentic *Da-sein* certainly believes that thinking is essentially calculative, Heidegger would argue that he, along with authentic *Da-sein*, knows better. We only believe thinking to be calculative because we have blinded ourselves to how things really are. Now this means that Heidegger can coherently describe calculation as one of *Da-sein*'s modes of being/thinking, whilst still arguing that dwelling and ethos are the mode of being/thinking that most correctly describes how *Da-sein* is in the world. After all, as Heidegger puts it:

Through [the calculative thinking of enframing] the other possibility is blocked, that man [sic] might be admitted more and sooner and ever more primally to the essence of that which is unconcealed and to its unconcealment, in order that he might experience as his essence his needed belonging to revealing (Heidegger, 1977: 26).

Now in the above quote Heidegger can of course be seen as developing his argument as to *Da-sein*'s role in the revealing-concealing of Being – a role also delineated by him through his discussions of thinker as shepherd and/or poet. *Da-sein* as thinker in both of these cases is in effect the medium by which Being comes to the world¹⁵, and the realization of this stands for *Da-sein*'s ownmost potential. In other words, ethos stands for and describes *Da-sein*'s potential essential being-in-the-world. Thinking ethically for Heidegger, then, is thinking *Da-sein*'s essential being, or, putting this otherwise, it simply describes *Da-sein*'s dwelling being-with. This, of course, brings us right back to the beginning where Heidegger argues that what matters in understanding our being is that we realize that our being is as a "how" as opposed to a "what".

Finally, then, there is one more point that I wish to make that is resultant from some of the ideas I've put forward here. That is, I would

¹⁵ More specifically, the language of *Da-sein* as thinker is this medium. Far from being mere communication or speech, language "is the house of Being, which is appropriated by Being and pervaded by Being" (1998: 254).

argue that it is this recognition of poetic thinking being *Da-sein*'s possible dwelling in and with the world that heads off another common critique of Heidegger's project with regards to his challenge of the metaphysical tradition. Basically, taken at face value, the proposal that we can – and should – arrive at a new ground for thinking – or, to use Heidegger's earlier language, that we can actually overcome metaphysics – seemingly points to a paradox. That is, this “new” form of thinking would itself be open to charges of forgetting its own being as that of being simply a dwelling letting-be – charges that Derrida and Caputo, for instance, have made on several occasions, and that are very common among critics of the post-metaphysical project¹⁶. This, however, is, I think, to misconstrue Heidegger's delineation of meditative and poetic thinking. That is, as *Da-sein*'s potential of dwelling in and with the world, poetic thinking simply cannot found or exemplify a new system – a “what” – systems, after all, are the domain of calculative and/or metaphysical thinking. Indeed, it is due to this insight that Heidegger consistently stresses first that his thinking is only a “stumbling” and second that meditative thinking – to be meditative thinking – can only ever display a “preparatory” rather than “founding character” (Heidegger, 1993: 436). Overall such thinking simply consists of two potential attunements that might be representative of *Da-sein*'s dwelling in and with the world. First the potentiality of remaining constitutively open to the danger inherent in that ordering and calculative enframing which “drives out every other possibility of revealing” (Heidegger, 1977: 27), and, second, that of remaining constitutively open and responsive to the interplay of the fourfold, a responsiveness that can by nature never become complacent. It is this, then, that I suggest might in fact exonerate Heidegger when we push through the question of the relation of his ownmost dwelling and thinking.

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¹⁶ To mention only two key texts, Caputo critiques Heidegger's project in terms of its mythologizing “tendencies” in his aptly named *Demythologizing Heidegger* (Caputo, 1993b: 1); whilst Derrida engages critically and productively with Heidegger in his *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question* (Derrida, 1989).

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MOODS THAT MATTER: HEIDEGGER, AFFECT AND WALLACE STEVENS' "THIRTEEN WAYS OF LOOKING AT A BLACKBIRD"

PETER WILLIAMS

There is much discussion about mood in cognitive theory, but it seems to be generally agreed, for the moment anyway, that mood is a higher order functional and dispositional state that stands in a determinative relationship to both emotions and behaviour. Moods therefore possess a primordial quality, or Being as Heidegger would perhaps say, that cause behaviours "directly and immediately, as well as indirectly through the mediation of our emotions and the modification of broad areas of our nervous system" (Griffiths, 1997: 251). Moods therefore possess manifold potentials, among them the ability to absorb agency by distancing what I would term "dispositional modes of being" from volitional activity and to assist it by negotiating and managing its practical interactions with the world, with the "aroundness of the environment."

It is probably useful here to abide by Heidegger's distinction between "world" and "aroundness of the environment" which he equates with the specific spatio-temporal qualities of entities, bodies, objects and things in a specific domain or environment (Heidegger, 1962: 134-135). "World", on the other hand, is a concept encompassing the sum total of all possible "meanings" in regard to all ontic things. He provides the example of mathematics, among others, when he says, "when one talks of the 'world' of a mathematician, 'world' signifies the realm of possible objects of mathematics" (Heidegger, 1962: 93). "World" then is the concrete historical structure in which Being shows itself and hides itself at the same time, and it is the "world" that determines in what ways things will be things.

On a more microscopic level, if the neuroscientific picture develops according to its present state, then the effects of moods would modify the probability of transmissions between a given, perhaps sensory, input, an

existing internal state and an output or response. Emotions, for example, are implemented by neural states. For a neurologist like Antonio Damasio who investigates the shared balance of powers between body and mind which constitute our emergence as conscious, affective beings, emotions are nerve activation patterns that correspond to a state of our *internal* world¹. He terms brain patterns “cognitive representations”, so thinking then could be considered a pattern of nerve cell activation. Particular thoughts represent particular patterns of activation. A mood is a neurochemical condition which modifies the propensities of one neural event to bring about another so it thus alters the functional or behavioural description realised in an affective response.

Moods, as I think Heidegger characterises them, without the help of contemporary knowledge of the neurological bases of behaviour and the critical roles played by neurotransmitters such as serotonin, norepinephrine and dopamine, stand in their “primordial state” or what cognitive theorists call “higher order dispositions”². I will in this discussion prefer the Heideggerian “primordial” state to “higher order dispositions”, although I see both as primary, originary states of being or modes of existence that are prior to emotional, cognitive or intentional states; both predispose us to certain ways of feeling and behaving.

The important point for neuroscientists, cognitive theorists and philosophers alike is that moods overwhelm us; their source is as indeterminate as their compass, yet they hold a power over our subjective intensities and experiences that is even stronger than our ideas, conceptualisations, representational thinking and, often, our volitional activities. To illustrate, I will attempt to trace the contours of my own mood when reading Heidegger to show how it positions me in different critical attitudes and frameworks with respect to Heidegger’s work and then to how my understanding of the primordially of mood reflects upon a reading of Wallace Stevens’ “Thirteen ways of Looking at a Blackbird”.

I come to Heidegger late in a diffident, ambivalent mood. He exasperates me with the density of his language – his “nesses”, his

¹ Damasio claims that “[b]rains can have many intervening steps in the circuits mediating between stimulus and response, and still have no mind, if they do not meet an essential condition: the ability to display images internally and to order those images in a process called thought” (Damasio, 1994: 89).

² First introduced by C.D. Broad (1933). Broad’s ideas were taken up by Vincent Nowlis (1963) who suggested that moods are higher-order dispositions and emotions lower-order dispositions. Moods therefore, according to this view, are dispositions to have emotions. Griffiths points out, however, that moods predispose us not only to emotions, but also to actions.

"clearings", his "beings" and his "callings". I find myself putting my responses to him into scare quotes, as if they might be the source of constant and repetitious bracketing and qualification. Like Derrida in his "Retrait of Metaphor"³ I too experience a mood of withdrawal, and I am doubtful if I can translate myself into Heidegger in the way that I would, say, a foreign language. Still, rational metaphysics teaches that man becomes all things by understanding them, and that we understand ourselves and the world in which we live as translated through these rational frameworks.

Heidegger locates this source of knowledge in the disclosedness of *Dasein* as being-in-the-world, but he also holds that *Dasein* itself is disclosed in the moods we inhabit. *Dasein* then is Heidegger's term for the structure of an individual consciousness aware of its contingent state, as mine is now, aware of being-in-the-world yet struggling to exercise its capacity for affective possibilities – perhaps even boredom and disinterestedness. I would be relieved if I could "master my mood", which is certainly possible, and probably even desirable, "through knowledge and will". Mastery is signified in certain states of being that prioritise volition and cognition. Heidegger warns, however, that we must not be seduced by these moments of mastery into denying that "ontologically mood is a primordial kind of Being for Dasein, in which Dasein is disclosed to itself *prior* to all volition and cognition, and *beyond* their range of disclosure" (Heidegger, 1962: 75). Furthermore, in those moments when we master a mood, we do so with some other mood, with a counter-mood. We are then never free of moods; moods cascade and agglomerate to form what Merleau-Ponty might refer to as "Depth", the dimension of the hidden and the "simultaneous" without which "there would not be a world or Being" (Merleau-Ponty, 1973: 219). These "depths" are unintentional and beyond the control of the rational mind; they are simply states we experience as "indeterminateness comes to the fore" (Heidegger, 1977: 101).

Mood then is a modality of presence. Our mood has already disclosed Being-in-the-world as a whole, and makes it possible first of all to direct ourselves towards something in the "aroundness of the environment". Mood constitutes the weight of the time, place and Being surrounding and traversing our cognitive activity, and pre-disposes us to certain emotions, feelings and behaviours. My *Dasein*, for example, my being-in-the-world, is disclosed in my "turning away" from Heidegger – I maintain my distance, and embrace my reserve and refusal. I am now, in Heideggerian

³ First published in *Enclitic* 2, 1978: 5-33.

terms, like “[a] stone [that] has instantly withdrawn again into the same dull pressure and bulk of its fragments” (Heidegger, 1971: 46-47); I am pressing downward and manifesting my heaviness. My mood has positioned me, and for me to live authentically I must embrace the ethics, the mode of existence, of my “stoneness” which, like the earth itself, “shrinks from every disclosure and constantly keeps itself closed up” (Heidegger, 1971: 47).

When I ground my existence in my mood, when I submit to my “stoneness”, I open myself to a strange but compelling doubleness. One aspect of my consciousness observes myself from the outside, becoming appalled at how I have surrendered myself to a situation in which the ego loses its autonomy and renounces its active, willing powers. Yet from within my mood, from my inhabiting of the mood, such reflective or ethical judgements seem almost small, irrelevant and certainly gross because they fail to comprehend and contain the immense expansiveness that moods afford. Moods overcome us and cause global changes in propensities to occupy other affective and behavioural states and to respond to external stimuli and sensory provocations.

I feel that by embracing and expanding my “stoneness” I stand in the same relation to Heidegger as Heidegger stands to poetry. The nature of this relationship could be called “estrangement”. Accompanying this feeling of estrangement is a certain amount of anxiety, a primordial mood and an overwhelming affect with which Heidegger is inevitably concerned. Anxiety, a mood that has no object and no propositional content (as opposed to an emotion like fear that has a particular source and object, usually “within-the-world”) functions for Heidegger as a reminder of our “thrownness” into the world, and that our life and death, our Being, must be confronted. In the mood of anxiety, for example, “one feels ill at ease” (Heidegger, 1977: 101), and nothing in particular is the source of this feeling. It is perhaps Heidegger’s interest in the “nothing” that, in its everyday usage and in its metaphysical context, connects his earlier and later works. “The nothing” names the source of all that is perhaps dark and troublesome in existence, that which seems to rise from nowhere and return to it, but it also expresses the disclosure of Being as such and the illumination surrounding whatever this disclosure brings to light. In this sense, anxiety is not just negative and empty, but also positive and full. Nothingness is fullness. Nothing is the characteristic of Being and is what Heidegger terms “equiprimordial” which implies fullness because without the originary revelation of the nothing there would be, according to Heidegger, “no selfhood and no freedom” (Heidegger, 1977: 103).

Heidegger's analysis of the mood of anxiety here is important because it reveals the limitations that occur when an individual tries to reduce a mood to specific emotional dramas shaped by a concept like fear. Epistemic culture easily converts anxiety into fear, thereby reducing the primordial to the pragmatic. Treating situations as if they were shaped by the affect of fear narrows the subject's field of concern to what can be dealt with in the practical present. On the other hand, it is in the nothing of anxiety that the original openness of beings as beings is revealed. In the nothing, Heidegger says, beings recognise themselves as "beings – and not nothing". Anxiety therefore attunes us to aspects of situations that fear suppresses or sublimates because anxiety does not produce a single (intentional) object with which one can engage, and is not therefore a call to action. The general feeling of being "down", for example, does not require that we be down about anything in particular. Rather than finding itself defined by the need to act, anxiety is bereft of just such reasons and motivations, and so instead illuminates the primordial gulf between the subject's desires and the objective conditions that might justify or satisfy them.

The mood of anxiety therefore takes on complex values for Heidegger: its negative function is to free consciousness from any illusion that it can find the meanings it desires in either objective structures of the world or in its own practical abilities. Anxiety dramatises the emptiness that each subject must embrace in order to give meaning to his/her own mortality. But this "negative" function must itself be understood in terms of its own limitations. Anxiety itself reveals a power of spirit that finds positive values for this lack of groundedness, because, acutely aware of the lack of external determinants, subjectivity can embrace its own contingency and identify with its own particular modes of discovery and disclosure of self and world. This identification constitutes "care" for Heidegger, which is itself most poignantly felt in the phenomenon of anxiety.

Heidegger's embrace of primordality relies on the interrelatedness of opposites – nothingness and fullness, being and not-being, truth and untruth. Once the foundations for a rationalist metaphysics have been ungrounded in this way, Being begins to make sense as the constitutive possibility of not-being any longer. Being cannot therefore be considered as presence, since the only organ that can actualise it, thought, remembers being as what has already disappeared, a void moment of absence. Being is then a trace of past language and presence is absence. Cast in these terms, primordality is aligned with what we might term "prereflective experience" which avoids the inevitable distortions propagated by reality's reflection on the mirror of the mind. The "aroundness of the environment"

is then perceived in its phenomenological aspect of constant transformation, of constant becoming, which resists reduction to the grammatical rules of language and logic, and rejects what I would term the “grammaticalisation” of conceptual categories. This process, of returning thinking to its natural, primordial element (Being) is called by Heidegger “irrationalism” and, for him, thinking comes to end when it exceeds or loses its element.

If Heidegger’s relationship to poetry could be called estrangement, and if the anxiety of estrangement is a nothingness or a “without thinking” in the “technical-theoretical” sense (*technē*, a “mode of knowing”) that is itself primordial, then it may be reasonable to think that for Heidegger poetry might itself be something primordial. In his *Letter on Humanism*, Heidegger says, “But the world’s beauty is heralded in poetry, without yet becoming manifest as the history of Being” (Heidegger, 1977: TBA). Poetry is a means for the disclosure of Being. Perhaps this idea is not unlike Vico’s sense of “poetic wisdom” (*sapienza poetica*) which governs the power of human culture to cast experience in terms of “imaginative universals”. For Heidegger and Vico alike, poetry is primordial, like a mood, and is temporally and logically prior to abstract thought. It is a necessary mode of expression:

When the wind, shifting quickly, grumbles
in the rafters of the cabin, and the
weather threatens to become nasty....

Three dangers threaten thinking.

The good and thus wholesome
danger is the nighness of the singing
poet.

The evil and thus keenest danger is
Thinking itself. It must think
against itself, which it can only
seldom do.

The bad and thus meddling danger
Is philosophizing

(Heidegger, 1971: 8).

Poetry, like mood, is an originary state that first makes language possible and it becomes the primitive language of a historical people.

Rather than a rationalist metaphysics Vico, and perhaps also Heidegger for whom knowledge and rational opinions are only one kind of disclosure, at least the Heidegger of "Holderlin" and "What Are Poets For?", proposes an imaginative metaphysics that becomes all things by not understanding them. Vico says, "for when man understands he extends his mind and takes in all things, but when he does not understand he makes things out of himself and becomes them by transforming himself into them" (Vico, 1961: 156).

The power of poetic language thus derives from its ability to say something by not saying it, or to say it by pointing to something else, or even by its indicating the opposite of what the poet intends to say as found in rhetorical figures such as metaphor and metonymy. And if we return to the primordially of anxiety, we could say that the poet's anxiety results not from influence, as proposed by Harold Bloom, but from the subjugation of the guts, the seat of the aesthetic dimension according to Nietzsche⁴, to the rules of an external reality. Nietzsche emphasises the physicality of the poet when he says that artists, "if they are any good, are (physically as well) strong, full of surplus energy, powerful animals, sensual; without a certain overheating of the sexual system a Raphael is unthinkable" (Nietzsche, 1967: 421). For Heidegger, however, the poet penetrates and communicates with the reader by dwelling within the "spirit of the words" which awakens in the reader his or her own imaginative universals. This spirit is a reference to the essential dimension of language itself which is as original a structure of being-in-the-world as mood, and the language of poets discloses Being as least as authentically as the language of thinkers. Yet poeticizing and thinking, as demonstrated by Heidegger's poem (above) are not the same.

In his later work, "The Origin of the Work of Art", Heidegger goes on to state that "Self-assertion of nature, however, is never a rigid insistence upon some contingent state, but surrender to the concealed originality of the source of one's being. In the struggle, each opponent carries the other beyond itself" (Heidegger, 1971: 49). This description of the opposition between earth and world reminds us of the Kantian sublime and the leap-frogging struggle, triggered by imagination, between understanding and reason in which the sublime ultimately reminds us the incompatibility of rational ideas and sensory presentation. The sublime's end is to lead us to feel a purposiveness in ourselves that is independent of nature, and to discover a faculty of resistance that encourages us to measure ourselves

⁴ Nietzsche claims that aesthetics is "physiology", perhaps again aligning cognitive states with visceral patterns more than even he would acknowledge.

against the apparent omnipotence of nature. For Kant, then, the sublime is a movement or a migration – a displacement from a threatening nature to the capacity of reason and thinking to rise above the threat of extinction.

By emphasising a similar struggle, Heidegger seems to be moving us towards more heterogenous notions, such as the multi-dimensional nature of the conflict between world and earth that stands behind his estrangement. This conflict, he says:

is not a rift (*Riss*) as a mere cleft that is ripped open; rather it is the intimacy which opponents bring to each other. This rift carries the opponents into the source of their unity by virtue of their common ground. It is a basic design, an outline sketch that draws the basic features of *the rise of the lightening of beings*. This rift does not let the opponents break apart; it brings the opposition of measure and boundary into their common outline. (Heidegger, 1971: 63. Emphasis mine).

It may be in the intimacy of this rift between earth and world, in the tear and the sketch that, while feeling the downward weight of my “stoneness”, I also feel the rising lightness of my acknowledged, contingent state of being. The establishing of a world and the setting-forth of the earth belong together in the unity of a poem’s or an artwork’s being; the two, like my own weightiness and lightness, are essentially different to one another yet never separate. And yet this same rift manifests in a work of art as something itself primordial, like a mood or an atmosphere, through which the artwork or poem comes radically into its own – when it becomes so solitary or singular that we as beings feel like we loosen our connection with it⁵. Think of the language of Joyce’s *Finnegan’s Wake* or the recalcitrance and withdrawal of minimalist artworks that mirror nothing we can recognise except, perhaps, a reconfigured reflection of our own selves. This singularity is manifested in the work’s originality materiality and absoluteness, and we cannot forget Adorno in this respect when he says: “If it is essential to artworks that they be things, it is no less essential that they negate their own status as things, and thus art turns against art. The totally objectified artwork would congeal into a mere thing, whereas if it altogether evaded objectivism it would regress into an impotently powerless subjective impulse and flounder in the empirical world” (Adorno, 1997: 175).

⁵ The distinction between “artwork” and “poem” is probably unnecessary. Heidegger claims in “The Origin of the Work of Art” that “[...] all art is in essence poetr,” (Heidegger, 1971: 73). He also says that “the nature of art is poetry” (Heidegger, 1971: 75).

The primordial work of estrangement is radically different from formalist, structuralist or poststructuralist notions of "defamiliarisation" in which the familiar is experienced with a new innocence, or a new awakening of the senses, a new affect or an enlightened consciousness. Instead, it is a sort of annihilation related to poetry and to the "slipping away of beings" which returns us once more to the mood of anxiety. Anxiety is the counterpart in experience for the "slipping away of beings". In the aesthetics of the "Origin of the Work of Art" there is essentially nothing for the subject to experience – our relation to the work of art and its work is not that of experiencing subjects. So what are we? What affective hold or relationship can we then have with artworks? According to Heidegger, art disconnects beings from the hold we have on them, beings "slip away in the clear night of Nothing". If artworks emancipate anything it is not our affective dispositions, our consciousness, our subjectivity or even our mood, but rather the "world" itself. Art overturns the will-to-power, it takes the world out of our hands and allows it to come into its own.

How do we feel about a world taken away from us that cannot be represented in a narrative of crisis or rupture or loss? As a way or responding to this sort of question, I'd like to take a quick look at Wallace Stevens' poem "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" as a way of teasing out its possibilities for showing thinking's ability to "spring and let go", as Heidegger would say, under the whimsical but non-determining influence of a primordial mood. Stevens has often been described as a poet "of the imagination" – a formulation which, to my mind, exaggerates his links to romanticism if we understand "imagination" as an abstract, autonomous, self-legislating faculty of fancy in the romantic sense. If we, however, revise our notion of imagination so that it becomes a faculty more contingently related to "world", "the aroundness of the environment" and the artist's own peculiar physiology, then imagination becomes something more like an organising principle that is both originary and mediated. It is then self-regarding, demonstrating all the modalities of care in terms of coming towards its authentic self, but also dwells on things outside the self by engaging with what Heidegger calls the three "*ekstases*" of time: future, past and present. According to this version of the imagination, the poetry must be emptied of the idea of the poet as expressive, imaginative hero in order to locate a site in which "poeticising" can emerge. Since for Heidegger truth is the clearing and concealing of beings as such, truth is revealed while it is being poeticised. "All art", he says, "as the letting happen of the advent of the truth of what is, is, as such, *essentially poetry*" (Heidegger, 1971: 72). Poeticizing

therefore is not only the art of poetry, but also that primordial quality in which all forms of art find their essence in the poetic coming-to-presence.

Stevens himself seems to give a similarly circumscribed role to imagination that is not quite Heideggerian but that also reflects the idea that imagination has its sources and dependencies in things outside of and external to the self. Instead of the idea of the imagination as autonomous and self-constituting, Stevens also emphasises the contingency and dependence of imagination when he says in a 1936 letter, "Imagination has no source except in reality, and ceases to have any value when it departs from reality. Here is a fundamental principle about the imagination; It does not create except as it transforms[...]. Thus reality = the imagination, and the imagination = reality. The imagination gives, but gives in relation" (Stevens, 1972: 364). Stevens' claims about imagination here align well with Heidegger's own when he says: "[...] it becomes questionable whether the nature of poetry, and this means at the same time the nature of projection, can be adequately thought of in terms of the power of imagination" (Heidegger, 1971: 72-73). Both would reject the view that imagination realises a distinctive content, symbolically charged with visionary meanings or composed to generate moral effects.

In his "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" (Stevens, 1990: 20-22), Stevens predisposes us to "let things be" by moving us away from the symbolic valencies of imagination and representational thinking and towards imaginative processes as the apprehension of estrangement. Under the auspices of mood, imagination then breaks open a space, a "clearing", in which language brings into being primordial scenes in which things come into their own for the first time as things in all their singularity, in all their self-possession.

The poem's opening tercet is a still scene, the minimalist quiet of a primordial "coming into existence" or an oriental painting brushed with haiku and imagist delicacy:

Among twenty snowy mountains
The only moving thing
Was the eye of the blackbird

This opening could be read or even viewed as synecdoche for the activity of the reader/viewer and a metaphor for the work of the poet where the moving eye signifies the initial impulse for the thirteen ways of looking. It is important to recognise, however, the way that the movement of the entire poem is propelled by the indecipherability of mood as articulated in Stanza VI:

Icicles filled the long window
 With barbaric glass
 The shadow of the blackbird
 Crossed it, to and fro
 The mood
 Traced in the window
 An indecipherable cause

Stevens here identifies with the provisional nature of this indecipherable mood and how it positions the blackbird itself differently in each of the thirteen stanzas, as if the blackbird is language itself coming into existence. The poem therefore does not allow us to build a coherent, consistent picture of the blackbird by cumulatively applying what we understand of it from each of the thirteen stanzas. Instead, in a process similar to Heidegger's "clearing and concealing of being" the linguistic function of the one constant in the poem, the word "blackbird", keeps shifting according to the mood or perspective of each stanza. It may be part of a poetic figure in one stanza ("I was of three minds,/ Like a tree/ In which there are three blackbirds", a more or less literal reference in another ("At the sight of blackbirds/ Flying in a green light").

These positionings are the work of estrangement, a withdrawal of the poem from a universal sense of truth or reality, from a metaphysic, to a perspectivism in which "truth" and "reality" are confined to and restricted by the moments in which they are sensed or read. The multiple perspectives reflect the adjustments that reflect the impossibility of achieving a traditional metaphysic, but that instead grant the mind's permission to "spring and let go". In each of the thirteen stanzas, Stevens re-creates a reality, a truth, according to the ontology of a different mood or frame-of-mind. The poem's "meaning" then becomes its reflection through thirteen stanzas of how its various moods correlate with Stevens' particular perspectives on the blackbird and "blackbirdness" and how those dispositions predispose us to understand those perspectives and things becoming what they are. If I can return to Damasio's model of brain functioning, I would like to claim, without any empirical evidence, that Stevens' language here represents not only the emergence of Being in a Heideggerian sense but perhaps also triggers patterns of neural events in the reader's body that are "thought" by the mind as an emergence of the blackbird itself, in all of its thirteen forms and contexts.

The speculative mood of Stanza V might support such a reading. Here the blackbird itself becomes a certain kind of language that mediates the "inflections" and "innuendos" constituting the vicissitudes of the speaker's preferences:

I do not know which I prefer,
 The beauty of inflections
 Or the beauty of innuendos,
 The blackbird whistling
 Or just after.

Language functions here like an interrogative mood that predisposes us to a range of tonal cadences and linguistic forms that might for Heidegger constitute a “breaking open”, a coming into being of decidedness and vacillation, of sound and silence and of beauty and nothingness. For Stevens, this mood functions to illuminate and organise these states of being by placing the speaker inside them, by inhabiting them as one would inhabit a “world” thus exposing the attributes and patterns fundamental to these states of intimacy and care.

This primordial perspectivism comes closest to being thematised by Stevens in Stanza IX:

When the blackbird flew out of sight,
 It marked the edge
 Of many circles.

Each sense of the blackbird, marking “the edge/ Of many circles” defines a new perspective on “blackbirdness” that holds only until the blackbird crosses its next horizon, when the reader broaches the next stanza of the poem. Horizons are, according to Nietzsche, what “[w]e measure the world by” and “within which our senses confine each of us”. Thus a “concentric circle is drawn around every being” (Nietzsche, 1903: 122) in much the same way that Stevens’ blackbird traverses the stanzas of his poem and crosses the horizons of its own forms of being.

My original “stoneness” relates to my authenticity of mood. Mood is a fundamental way in which my *Dasein* is aware of its being-in-the-world, and it is not reason that gives *Dasein* its basic access to being, but moods⁶. The authenticity or inauthenticity of my mood is determined by whether it discloses the truth of my *Dasein* or conceals the truth. Authenticity is resoluteness and resoluteness demands for Heidegger the willingness to have a conscience. My mood of anxiety before Heidegger disclosed my *Dasein* and in anxiety *Dasein* is brought before itself and so my authenticity is understood. Heidegger says:

⁶ Nietzsche asks, “How did reason come into the world? As is fitting, in an irrational manner, by accident. One will have to guess at it as at a riddle” (Nietzsche, 1976: 81).

The disclosedness of Dasein in wanting to have a conscience, is thus constituted by anxiety as a state-of-mind, by understanding as a projection of oneself upon one's ownmost being-guilty, and by discourse as reticence. This distinctive and authentic disclosedness, which is attested in Dasein itself by its conscience – *this reticent self-projection upon one's ownmost Being-guilty, in which one is ready for anxiety* – we call 'resoluteness'" (Heidegger, 1962: 343).

"Stoneness" therefore relates my mood to my authenticity, and it is in this authenticity that I position myself in relation to the combination of potentialities that both my mood and Heidegger offer. Authenticity is not then a construction, but a fact of how particular contexts take form in mood and resoluteness. This resoluteness arises not from the deliberate action or willing of a subject, but from the opening up of a being to its primordial captivity in a mood, which moves towards the openness and truth of Being. This is an ethical state that accrues a kind of knowing that is essential to our "care-ful" dealing with and understanding of ourselves, others and things. The importance of these relationships is perhaps better expressed in another poem by Wallace Stevens, "The Poem That Took the Place of a Mountain":

It reminded him how he needed
 A place to go in his own direction,

How he had recomposed the pines,
 Shifted the rocks and picked his way among clouds,

For the outlook that would be right,
 Where he would be complete in an unexplained completion:

The exact rock where his inexactness
 Would discover, at last, the view toward which they had edge

(Stevens, 1990, 374).

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TERRENCE MALICK'S *THE THIN RED LINE* AND THE QUESTION OF HEIDEGGERIAN CINEMA

ROBERT SINNERBRINK

In his 1979 foreword to *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*, Stanley Cavell remarks on the difficulties presented by the relationship between Heidegger and film (Cavell, 1979: ix-xxv). Cavell does so with reference to Terrence Malick's *Days of Heaven* (1978), a film that not only presents us with images of preternatural beauty, but also acknowledges the self-referential character of the cinematic image, the way it manifests the play of presence and absence that is inherent in the experience of the world viewed (Cavell, 1979: xiv). As Cavell remarks, *Days of Heaven* does indeed have a metaphysical vision of the world, but "one feels that one has never quite seen the scene of human existence—call it the arena between earth (or days) and heaven—quite realized this way on film before." (Cavell, 1979: xiv-xv). This raises a difficulty for the philosophically minded viewer of film. To ask film theorists to think about Heidegger, as Cavell observes, is to ask them to endorse an "embattled" perspective in Anglophone culture, one "whose application to film is difficult to prove" (Cavell, 1979: xvi). On the other hand, to ask academic philosophers to think about film through Heidegger is to ask them to grant film "the status of a subject that invites and rewards philosophical speculation, on a par with the great arts," a concept that is itself brought into question by film, as Walter Benjamin observed long ago (Cavell, 1979: xvi-xvii). Yet it is undeniable, for Cavell, that the films of Terrence Malick—student of phenomenology and translator of Heidegger—have a beauty and radiance that suggest something like a realization of Heidegger's thinking of the relationship between Being and beings, the radiant self-showing of things in luminous appearance (Cavell: 1979: xv).

In what follows, I shall accept Cavell's invitation to think about the relationship between Heidegger and film—indeed the relationship between philosophy and cinema—by looking at Terrence Malick's 1998 masterpiece, *The Thin Red Line*. One question I would like to explore is

whether we can talk of a “Heideggerian cinema,” and to ask what such talk might mean. Another is whether we should describe *The Thin Red Line* as “Heideggerian Cinema”, as some recent critics have argued, and to examine what *this* might mean. Along the way I discuss two different approaches to the film, a “Heideggerian” approach that takes it to be unquestionably an instance of Heideggerian cinema (Furstenau and MacEvoy, Kaja Silverman), and a “film-as-philosophy” approach, which argues that, while the film is philosophical, we should refrain from grounding the film in any specific philosophical framework, even that of Heidegger (Simon Critchley). In conclusion, I offer some brief remarks on how the film can indeed be regarded as a case of “Heideggerian cinema”, not because we need to read Heidegger in order to talk about our relationship to mortality, authentic existence, or to Being, but because Malick’s film performs a *cinematic poesis*, a technological revealing of mortality and world through image, sound, and time.

What is “Heideggerian Cinema”?

At first glance, the idea of a Heideggerian thinking of cinema seems unthinkable. Heidegger’s few remarks on the subject make it clear that he considered cinema (and photography) to be forms of technical image-making signifying the “end of art” in the age of technology. For all that, the only passage where Heidegger explicitly discusses a particular film is remarkably suggestive. In “A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer”, two interlocutors, the Inquirer and his Japanese guest, converse on the relationship between Western rationality and its dominance over the East Asian sense of art and world (Heidegger, 1982: 15-17). The Inquirer warns against the tendency to follow Western conceptual thought, for all its technological achievements, because this will blind us to the increasing “Europeanization of man and the earth [which] attacks at the source everything of an essential nature” (Heidegger, 1982: 16). As an example of this all-consuming Westernization, the Japanese guest suggests, surprisingly, Akira Kurosawa’s *Rashomon* (1950). The inquirer is perplexed, for he found *Rashomon* utterly enchanting, above all its subdued gestures: “I believed that I was experiencing the enchantment of the Japanese world, the enchantment that carries us away into the mysterious” (Heidegger, 1982: 17). The Japanese guest explains that the film was overly realistic, particularly in the battle scenes, which makes it far removed from the tradition of Japanese art and drama. It is not the realism of metaphysics, he hastens to add, but a realism pertaining to the ontological characteristics of the cinematic image. It is

the fact that the Japanese world is filmed at all, "captured and imprisoned at all within the objectness of photography", that makes *Rashomon* an example of the process Western techno-rationalisation (Heidegger, 1982: 17). Regardless of the film's undoubted aesthetic qualities, "the mere fact that our world is set forth in the frame of a film forces that world into the sphere of what you call of objectness" (Heidegger, 1982: 17). And this "objectification" of world through the technological media of photography and film is "already a consequence of the ever wider outreach of Europeanization" (Heidegger, 1982: 17). The Inquirer (a stand-in for Heidegger, one presumes) thus begins to understand his interlocutor's concern: far from presenting the "enchantment of the Japanese world", Kurosawa's *Rashomon* shows us the incompatibility between this non-Western sense of world, still replete with a sense of Being, and the Westernised, "technical-aesthetic product of the film industry" that suffers from a loss of the sense of Being (Heidegger, 1982: 17). In short, cinematic art intensifies, rather than reverses, the process of "objectification" of beings that is symptomatic of the Western forgetting of Being.

While intriguing, particularly for its implicit criticism of Western "orientalism", this passage is hardly a promising start for thinking about the relationship between Heidegger and cinema. Indeed, it suggests that there is little to be said other than that cinema is a pernicious manifestation of Western technological enframing. It is also a disappointing discussion of Kurosawa's work, given the latter's explicitly hybrid character, fusing Japanese with Western literary traditions (Shakespeare), and its revitalization of the Western action genre by combining it with martial aspects of Japanese drama¹. Given Heidegger's evident skepticism concerning film, what are we to make of the frequent talk of "Heideggerian cinema" that Malick's work seems to provoke?

For some viewers of Malick there is no real question here to ponder. According to a recent essay by Marc Furstenuau and Leslie MacEvoy, Malick's *The Thin Red Line* is clearly an instance of "Heideggerian cinema" (Furstenuau and MacEvoy, 2003). This follows firstly, they suggest, from the biographical facts of Malick's career. Malick studied philosophy as an undergraduate with Stanley Cavell, and briefly taught philosophy at the MIT, even teaching courses for Hubert Dreyfus. Malick

¹ As Julian Young notes, "Kurosawa, who had studied Western painting, literature, and political philosophy, based *Yojimbo* on a Dashiell Hammett novel, *Throne of Blood* on *Macbeth*, and *Ran* on *King Lear*. He never pretended otherwise than that his films were cultural hybrids" (Young, 2001: 149).

travelled to Germany in the mid 1960s to meet with Heidegger, and produced a scholarly translation of *Vom Wesen des Grundes* (*The Essence of Reasons*) for Northwestern University Press in 1969. Malick's promising career as a phenomenologist came to an abrupt halt, however, when he abandoned philosophy to become a film-maker². A philosopher turned film-maker is surely a rare and fascinating creature. Thus we can readily understand Furstenau and MacEvoy's confident claim that Malick clearly "transformed his knowledge of Heidegger in cinematic terms" (Furstenau and MacEvoy, 2003: 175), a knowledge that came to fruition in his first film, *Badlands* (1973), in *Days of Heaven* (1978), and in *The Thin Red Line* (1998).

While Malick's biography, according to Furstenau and MacEvoy, provides one reason to regard his work as Heideggerian, his films' philosophical complexity and aesthetic texture provides a stronger reason. Citing Cavell, they point to Malick's philosophical concern with the self-reflexive character of the cinematic image, the way the structures of presence and absence which shape metaphysical thinking are reenacted through the technology of the cinema. The reflexivity of the cinematic image involves a play between presence and absence, presenting a being through the image that is nonetheless absent, for us, *as* a being. Malick, according to Cavell, artistically explores this play between presence and absence, or the difference between (present) beings and their (concealed) Being. Hence the parallel that Cavell points to between metaphysical and cinematic representation. This conscious exploration of this parallel and its implications, for Furstenau and MacEvoy, is precisely what makes Malick an exemplary philosophical film-maker: "The task of a philosophically engaged cinema is to address both the inherent reflexivity of the film image, as well as the potential consequences of the transformation of the world into image" (Furstenau and MacEvoy, 2003: 176).

Malick's Heideggerianism, however, is not just a matter of the reflexivity of his cinematic work, or even a consequence of the technological transformation of reality into a stock of representational images. Echoing Heidegger on Hölderlin, they suggest that we should regard Malick as a cinematic poet responding to the destitution of modernity: "Malick has assumed the role of poet-philosopher [...] revealing through the use of poetic, evocative imagery the cinema's unique presencing of Being" (Furstenau and MacEvoy, 2003: 177). Much like Hölderlin and Rilke, Malick's cinema would be a form of poetic

² See Critchley (2005: 138) for a succinct resume of Malick's fascinating biography.

revealing or bringing-forth, a way or reawakening our lost sense of Being, of finitude and mortality, in a technological world transformed into world-image.

There are two points I would like to make regarding this strongly "Heideggerian" approach to Malick. The first is that we should be wary of reading the film solely through the lens of Malick's biography. The second is that recognizing the "Heideggerian" aspects in the film shouldn't blind us to other dimensions of its aesthetic and philosophical complexity. That Malick was a teacher of philosophy and translator of Heidegger need not prompt us assume that he makes "Heideggerian" films. Nor should the powerful treatment of themes such as mortality and finitude, the possibility of authentic existence, and our relationship with Being, blind us to the way that Malick also belongs, for example, to the tradition of American transcendentalism, embracing figures such as Emerson, Thoreau, or even Cavell. Rather than using Malick's Heideggerian background to reduce the film's complex imagery, style, and themes to a Heideggerian content, the relationship between Malick's films and philosophy, or in particular between Heidegger and *The Thin Red Line*, should remain a *question* rather than a presupposition for any reading of his work. This question is avoided in Furstenau and MacEvoy's framing of the film within Heidegger's thinking of Being. For what disappears from view is the film *as a film*, the detail of its narrative structure, the significance of its characters and their situation, the complexity of its sound and imagery.

Malick as phenomenologist of finitude

Kaja Silverman presents a more cinematically grounded approach to the film in her essay, "All Things Shining", a reading that also emphasizes Malick's Heideggerian vision of mortality and finitude (Silverman, 2003). If Furstenau and MacEvoy read Malick as a Heideggerian poet in destitute times, Silverman interprets Malick as a Heideggerian "existential" phenomenologist concerned to evoke "the Nothing" [*das Nichts*] in our experience of finitude and indeed of Being itself. While Furstenau and MacEvoy rely on the later, post-*Kehre* Heidegger of "What are Poets For?", "...Poetically Man Dwells ...", and "The Question Concerning Technology", Silverman focuses instead on the Heidegger of *Being and Time*, Division II, and the famous 1929 Freiburg lecture, "What is Metaphysics?" (Heidegger, 1993: 93-110). Silverman's Malick is not the post-metaphysical thinker of Being, but rather the "existential" phenomenologist concerned to disclose, through our experience of

anxiety, the encounter with nonbeing at the heart of our finite temporal existence. Malick's concerns are in any case philosophical rather than conventionally narratological (Silverman, 2003: 324), which explains the perplexity many critics and viewers experienced when confronted with Malick's idiosyncratic version of the war film genre³.

Indeed, Silverman too regards Malick's film as philosophy, a vision that is very much grounded in Heidegger's account of authentic being-toward-death (as explored in *Being and Time*, Division II) and the encounter with "the Nothing" (examined in "What is Metaphysics?"). Indeed, Heidegger's being-toward-death, as Silverman remarks, is less an account of a limit to existence than a way of existing in the world as finite, as grounded in the Nothing (Silverman, 2003: 334); it is less a way of embracing death than a way of affirming life by "living toward" death. Malick's exploration of this theme, moreover, invokes what Silverman calls a singular *affectivity*, a simultaneous negativity and affirmation: "both a darkness verging on total eclipse and a radiance brighter than the sun's return" (Silverman, 2003: 324). The film subjects us to the shattering experience of an almost unbearable negativity that permeates both our psychic core and our bodily being (Silverman, 2003: 324).

Indeed, *The Thin Red Line*, Silverman suggests, takes phenomenology to a place where Heidegger himself was not capable of bringing it: "the battlefield" (Silverman, 2003: 326). It is precisely here, as Heidegger hints, that we encounter finitude in its rawest sense; the experience of "the nothing" that dissolves our spurious independence, our generic *das Man-Selbst* subjectivity, and thereby reveals to us our "groundless" mortality⁴. To be sure, one hears echoes here of the "existentialist" theme of war as an authentic encounter with mortality, the *Front-Erlebnis* celebrated by writers such as Ernst Jünger. Far from exulting in negativity and violence, however, Malick's explorations of mortality and the meaning of authentic Being-toward-death are oriented by philosophical, ethical, even spiritual concerns. Private Witt's journey is one towards Being, the Nothing, that transpires through an authentic affective relationship to his own mortality, his "confrontation with the nonbeing that grounds him" (Silverman, 2003: 331). This is a confrontation that is manifested through his affective relationship with death, that is, through his *calm*, or what the later

³ One film critic notoriously gave the film a rating of four question marks; not an inappropriate rating for such a "Heideggerian" work!

⁴ See Heidegger's enigmatic remark in *Being and Time* that *Da-sein* can attain its authenticity as *anticipatory resoluteness* by "running under the eyes of death"; in so doing, it can "take over completely the being that it itself is in its thrownness" (Heidegger, 1996: §74, 350).

Heidegger called *Gelassenheit* or releasement. The metaphysical dimension of *The Thin Red Line* is centred on this affective encounter with non-being and finitude; an affective experience, disclosed through cinematic images, that might reawaken a sense of Being itself in its plurality and plenitude.

Indeed, the real conflict in *The Thin Red Line*, as Silverman suggests, is not the physical conflict of war, but rather “the affective conflict that knowledge of mortality precipitates in every human psyche” (Silverman, 2003: 336). It is knowledge of mortality that is the real source of the violence so manifest in the film, which is concerned with “death in general and not war in particular” (Silverman, 2003: 328). The significance of mortality is revealed through state of mind or mood rather than knowledge or action; for, “it is through one’s affective orientation to death and not through a bodily collapse” that one either meets mortality or else fails to meet it (Silverman, 2003: 327). This is an important point for understanding Malick’s art: the real drama in *The Thin Red Line* is existential and phenomenological rather than physical or historical; it is ontological rather than ontic, so to speak. In this respect, I would venture that *The Thin Red Line* is not really a war film at all; it presents rather a phenomenology of the experience of mortality, of different attitudes towards our own finitude, the encounter with the Nothing disclosed in the varying modes of fear, anxiety, indifference, aversion, egoism, and violence.

Witt’s opening question, in voice-over, sets the scene for this meditation on violence and mortality: “What is this war at the heart of nature?” Silverman eloquently describes what follows as we might call Witt’s phenomenological journey, his experience in locating the conflict first in nature, then attributing the conflict to an external invading force, this “evil” that possesses us, “mocking,” as Witt says, “what we might have known”. Witt learns, however, that this violence that stains our being is not due to a nature at odds with itself, or to a corruption of our own nature, but rather to our failure to confront our own mortality, our fundamental finitude as living-toward-death. War has an existential-ontological basis, rather than a psychological, historical, or political one: “we kill each other like this because we have not yet succeeded in apprehending in the indeterminateness of the ‘nothing’ the indeterminateness of being” (Silverman, 2003: 337). Cut off from Being, “like a coal thrown from the fire”, we revert to this brutal violence as a way of making manifest the disturbing, uncanny nature of the Nothing from which we flee or distract ourselves.

The counterpoint to violence is wonder, the openness to Being, manifested in Malick's extraordinary images of nature that punctuate the film, granting it a unique poetic resonance and contemplative mood. The Nothing that appears to be the source of life and death, however, can also give rise to what makes us most human, to what Silverman calls the "affirmative affects"; as Witt enumerates, to "glory, mercy, peace, truth ... calm of spirit, understandin', courage, the contented heart" (Silverman, 2003: 337). Malick succeeds admirably in presenting cinematically this experience of the Nothing, an affective orientation to death that is also the source of life, where "affective" means something like mood or attunement. This is not merely a psychological feeling or private emotion so much as a shared Heideggerian *Stimmung*: a world-disclosing mood that is also a mode of understanding and of practical orientation towards the world. *The Thin Red Line* evokes such moods—anxiety, boredom, dread, despair, wonder, joy, love—as ways of disclosing our authentic finitude or being-toward-death, which, as Silverman repeats, is less a way of dying than of living through our mortal end.

Thus, for example, it is the affect of *calm* that provides the appropriate mood or *Stimmung* for apprehending our finitude, a mood that pervades the extraordinary sequence depicting Witt's mother's death, and Witt's own confrontation with finitude in facing death calmly as a way of saving his fellow soldiers. Witt's death is also the conclusion of his phenomenological journey; having understood the nature of this mortal conflict at the heart of nature, which is really a conflict with our own mortal nature, Witt literally runs forward into death, embracing it calmly as coextensive with the life of the jungle forest clearing in which he is shot. "O my soul, let me be in you now" the dead Witt intones, over images of the wake of the patrol boat departing from the island over dark waters. "Look out through my eyes. Look out at the things you made. All things shining." With these final words, as Silverman remarks, Witt returns us to the finite world, now illuminated by wonder. His final lesson is profound: we can affirm Being, encounter the Nothing, only by experiencing this phenomenal world and our own mortality within it; moreover, this philosophical or existential insight can only be experienced affectively from a particular point of view. As Silverman puts it, *The Thin Red Line* literally shows how "we can affirm the world only through a very particular pair of eyes" (Silverman, 2003: 340).

There is much in Silverman's reading of the film that is enlightening, such as her subtle observation that Witt's mother's death scene in fact shows us *her* experience of calm in the face of death rather than Witt's own recollection of the event (note that his voiceover describes witnessing

his mother's death but seeing nothing glorious in it) (Silverman, 2003: 328). The sequence, with its gently singing bird and silent poetic gestures, ends with the camera panning up towards the roof, giving way to the blue of the sky, which "becomes part of the sea, land, and oceanscape of the Solomon Islands" (Silverman, 2003: 328). "'Openness to the world'", as Silverman observes, "is the dominant trope invoked by these last images" (Silverman, 2003: 328). Another important observation is that Witt's utopian-romantic vision of the harmonious life of the Melanesian community is *his* subjective fantasy, rather than Malick's orientalising naivety, a fantasy shattered by the violence of war and the reality of domination, disease, and discord. There is no question that Silverman's emphasis on Witt's "journey toward Being", his decision "to live 'toward'" his finitude through his early meditation upon his own death, enriches our cinematic and philosophical understanding of the film, particularly Malick's decision to make Witt the central character, and to turn the manner in which Witt faces his own death into the film's narrative climax (in James Jones' novel, Witt is a minor character, ignorant and racist, and he certainly does not die).

At the same time, however, Silverman's approach presupposes that we can talk about Malick's cinema, and *The Thin Red Line* in particular, as "Heideggerian" in a straightforward sense. Although they emphasise different aspects of Heidegger's thought, Furstenau, MacEvoy, and Silverman all assume that the film can be subsumed within a philosophical framework that would explain its thematic content and aesthetic style. This strongly "Heideggerian" approach applies philosophy to film or reads film in light of a given philosophical framework, without, however, raising the question of the relationship between philosophy and film, which is what a reading in the spirit of Heidegger's thought, I would suggest, might be expected to do.

Malick as cinematic philosopher

This remark parallels an objection made by Simon Critchley in his essay, "Calm: On Terrence Malick's *The Thin Red Line*" (Critchley, 2005). Indeed, Silverman, Furstenau and MacEvoy, all risk slipping on what Critchley dubs the three "hermeneutic banana skins" confronting any philosophically-minded viewer of Malick's work: 1) fetishising Malick the enigmatic auteur; 2) being seduced by Malick's intriguing relationship with philosophy; and 3) reducing the matter of Malick's film to a philosophical meta-text that would provide the key to its meaning. As Critchley remarks, doing film-philosophy is a risky undertaking: "To read

from cinematic language to some philosophical metalanguage is both to miss what is specific to the medium of film and usually to engage in some sort of cod-philosophy deliberately designed to intimidate the uninitiated” (Silverman, 2005: 139). Sobering words for any aspiring philosophical reader of film! Critchley’s point, however, is a serious one: a philosophical reading does not mean reading *through* the film to a framing philosophical meta-text, but rather presenting a reading *of* the film as itself engaged in philosophical reflection. A philosophical reading does not rely on a pre-given philosophical framework but remains rather with the cinematic matter or *Sache selbst*. This “film as philosophy” approach, in short, is one that takes film seriously, as “a form of philosophizing, of reflection, reasoning, and argument” (Critchley, 2005: 139).

So what of Critchley’s philosophical approach to *The Thin Red Line*? It offers a strongly immanent reading of the film, eschewing explicit recourse to given philosophical frameworks and foregrounding instead its textual, thematic, and narrative elements⁵. The narrative, Critchley suggests, is organized around three central relationships, each consisting of a conflict between two characters, and each articulating one of three related themes: 1) *Loyalty*, the conflict between Colonel Tall (Nick Nolte) and Captain Staros (Elias Koteas) over loyalty towards the commands of one’s superiors versus loyalty towards the men under one’s command; 2) *Love*, explored in Private Ben’s (Ben Chaplin) devotion to, and ultimate betrayal by, his wife Marty (Miranda Otto); and 3) the question of metaphysical *Truth*, an argument, in the fullest sense, between Sergeant Welsh (Sean Penn) and Private Witt (Jim Caviezel), a struggle that spans the entire length of the film.

For Critchley, the most important theme is that of *truth*, the search for which shapes the complex relationship between Welsh and Witt. The question, as Critchley puts it, is whether there is a transcendent metaphysical truth: “is this the only world, or is there another world?” (Critchley, 2005: 140). In an early dialogue, Welsh informs Witt that, “in this world, a man himself is nothing ... and there ain’t no world but this one.” Witt disagrees, replying that he has seen another world, beyond the merely physical realm. “Well,” Welsh replies, “you’re seeing something I never will.” This argument is elaborated throughout the course of the film. Welsh maintains that the war is ultimately about nothing more than “property”, which means that the best a man can do is to “make himself an island” and simply survive. Witt, by contrast, claims to see beyond the lie

⁵ Critchley thus discusses the ways in which Malick departs from James Jones’ gritty 1963 novel and the 1964 film version by Andrew Marton.

of war, finding amidst the violence and brutality the possibility of selfless sacrifice; he seeks an encounter with "the glory", with the moment of immortality that arrives in facing one's death with calm.

Their relationship thus takes on the character of a philosophical disputation, Welsh's "nihilistic physicalism", as Critchley describes, clashing with Witt's "metaphysical panpsychism" (Critchley, 2005: 141). Welsh's assertions are confounded by Witt's questions: "What is this war in the heart of nature?" "Where does this evil come from?" "Maybe all men got one big soul, that everybody's part of—all faces are the same man, one big self". Welsh's dispirited resignation is contrasted with Witt's affirmative spark: Witt survives the war, but is deadened; Witt dies but in an enlivened state, calmly sacrificing himself for his fellows. Who is "right" about the metaphysical truth of war? There can be no answer to this question, the ambivalence of the experience of war, as a confrontation with mortality, being precisely Malick's point: it "poisons the soul" but also "reveals the glory".

These metaphysical reflections on truth, mortality, and humanity, are, for Critchley, what makes Malick's film a philosophical work. The key to the film and to Malick's work generally, he suggests, is *calm*: the calm acceptance of death, of this-worldly mortality, a calmness present not only as a narrative theme but as a cinematic aesthetic. Malick's male protagonists, as Critchley observes, "seem to foresee their appointment with death and endeavour to make sure they arrive on time" (Critchley, 2005: 142-143). Witt is one such character, recklessly putting himself in situations of extreme danger, fascinated by the intimacy of death, but with an anticipation of it that brings not fear but calm. Early in the film, Witt describes his initially fearful response to his mother's death as follows: "I was afraid to touch the death that I seen in her. I couldn't find anything beautiful or uplifting about her going back to God. I heard people talk about immortality, but I ain't never seen it". Witt then wonders how it will be when he dies, what it would be like "to know that this breath now was the last one you was ever gonna draw". And it is here that he finds his answer about the relation between immortality and mortality: "I just hope I can meet it the same way she did, with the same ... calm. Because that's where it's hidden, the immortality that I hadn't seen".

As Kaja Silverman points out, however, this scene actually presents *Witt's mother's* sense of calm, rather than Witt's own recollection of his mother's death. For Witt recalls the *fear* he felt in seeing his mother "going to meet God". Yet it is her moment of calm before death that gives Witt a clue as to how to experience his own authentic being-toward-death (Silverman, 2005: 328). Be that as it may, the thought Malick presents

here, Critchley remarks, is that immortality can only be understood as this calm before death, the moment of eternal life that can only be imagined as inhabiting the instant of one's own death⁶. This surely tempts one to think about what Heidegger describes as authentic being-toward-death, as Silverman does in her reading of *The Thin Red Line* as a meditation on the Heideggerian Nothing. Indeed, Critchley himself points to the parallels with Heidegger's being-toward-death, the *Angst* that can be experienced as a kind of *Ruhe*, as peace or calm; yet to do so, he maintains, would be to slip on one of those hermeneutic banana skins mentioned earlier.

Can we avoid such hermeneutic slips? I suspect not, nor should we, for the Heideggerian context of *The Thin Red Line* necessarily resonates within the film, whether we embrace or eschew it, providing a horizon of thought and meaning that is impossible to bracket completely. Heidegger has, after all, left an indelible mark on our horizon of philosophical thinking. Indeed, the reflections in the film on death, mortality, finitude, and our relationship with Being, I suggest, gain at least some of their philosophical resonance from their distinctly Heideggerian tenor. In this respect, Critchley's strictly "immanentist" reading of *The Thin Red Line* risks foreclosing the very horizon of thought that nourishes much of the film's speculative and metaphysical vision.

This difficulty of avoiding Heidegger becomes clear in Critchley's concluding reflections on the ethical significance of *The Thin Red Line*. Here the theme in question is being open to the presencing of Nature, just letting things be, what we might describe, though Critchley does not, as an attitude of "releasement" in both an ethical and aesthetical sense. Witt's calm in the face of mortality is framed by the massive presence of nature, dwarfing the human drama of war, of physical violence and historical conflict. This beautiful indifference of nature, Critchley observes, might be viewed as a kind of *fatum* for Malick, "an ineluctable power, a warring force that both frames human war but is utterly indifferent to human purposes and intentions" (Critchley, 2005: 146). According to Critchley, this indifference to human concerns, which differs from the enchanted nature of animism, follows from Malick's broadly naturalistic conception of nature: "Things are not enchanted in Malick's universe, they simply *are*, and we are things too" (Critchley, 2005: 146). Things simply are, luminous and shining, remote from our purposes and strivings, being just as they are, "in all the intricate evasions of 'as'" (Critchley, 2005: 147). Malick's camera thus takes on a neutral perspective, calmly revealing their presence not *for* us but *despite* us.

⁶ Critchley also mentions Blanchot's *L'Instant de ma mort* in this context.

Malick is in this respect more akin to a poet like Wallace Stevens than to a thinker like Heidegger, though Critchley leaves the nature of this relationship tantalizingly open. In the end it is the poet Stevens who "frames" Critchley's reading of *The Thin Red Line*, which opens with Stevens' "The Death of a Soldier" and closes, aptly, with a quotation from "The Palm at the End of the Mind"—lines resonating with the final image of a coconut shoot emerging from out of the sandy shallows. As with the later Heidegger, we defer to the poet rather than the philosopher when it comes to that mode of poetic revealing which exceeds the philosophical framing of the film, or indeed the framework of philosophical discourse itself.

Surely here, philosophically anxious viewers might exclaim, we are talking of an experience evoking Heidegger's *Gelassenheit*! For all the care to avoid invoking a philosophical meta-text, or departing from our immersion in the cinematic *Sache*, we find ourselves talking of the way things presence, their luminous appearance, their revealing of a world that we do not master or control; an experience that reveals the mystery of finitude and the calm releasement towards time, death, and the mystery of Being. Hermeneutic banana skin or not, it seems difficult to avoid talk about Malick's cinematic "letting be" without invoking, at least implicitly, the Heideggerian thought of *Gelassenheit*, about which Critchley remains silent. Is Critchley's reading here not a touch "Heideggerian" after all? Surely it reveals, in a phenomenological manner, the way the film thematises death, finitude and our proper relationship with Being.

Interestingly, however, Critchley does not mention the theme that, in my view, is most central to the film: the confrontation with *mortality* and different attitudes towards our own finitude as mortal and finite beings. My suggestion would be that it is the, dare one say, properly "Heideggerian" theme of mortality that pervades the other themes of loyalty, love, truth, and indeed our relationship to Nature, lending these a philosophical subtlety and poetic richness. In this sense, reference to Heideggerian phenomenology seems indispensable, since what we are watching is nothing less than a phenomenology of mortality; one that demonstrates the distinctive experiences of mortality—our success or failure to confront it—in the stories of the different characters' experiences during the battle of Guadalcanal. This also means that the question of what we mean by "Heideggerian cinema" presents itself once again. Whereas Furstenuau and MacEvoy's approach threatens to subsume the film within a "Heideggerian" framework, Critchley's avoidance of such a framework might be taken as another kind of avoidance of the question of the

relationship between Heidegger and cinema—even where this relationship becomes, as it does with Malick, marvelously thought-provoking.

A Cinematic *Poesis*?

In conclusion I want to offer some brief remarks suggesting an alternative way of approaching the question of "Heideggerian cinema". As discussed earlier, Heidegger's thinking on film, such as it is, remains overwhelmingly negative: film is a powerful instance of reductive technological en-framing that only intensifies the Western obliteration of Being. We should recall here, however, that Heidegger's claim that en-framing or *Ge-stell* as the essence of technology—the revealing and ordering of beings as a totality of available resources—is a thoroughly *ambivalent* process: it not only presents the great danger of a destructive reduction of human beings to manipulable resources, but also presents the possibility of a "saving power"—of a new relation of appropriation between Being, beings, and human beings that might emerge from within the technological world (Heidegger, 1977). What would be the artform most essential to the technological age? Surely cinema: the technological en-framing of reality that enables us to reveal luminous appearances in time. If we take cinema to be the artform most appropriate to the age of technology, then such ambivalent possibilities must also be present in cinematic art, despite the dominance of standardised Hollywood conventions, which often do reduce film to a "worldless" aesthetic resource.

Despite the undeniable instrumentalisation of modern experience, technological en-framing also opens up the possibility of a new way of revealing world, namely through film as a form of cinematic *poesis*. By this I mean a revealing or bringing-forth through sound and image that displaces the conventional representational and narrative focus on presenting objects in their presence within the action-directed, motivational schemas of self-willing subjects. One need only compare *The Thin Red Line* with Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) to understand the contrast I am proposing here. Such an anti-representationalist account of cinematic *poesis* could supplement the readings of Malick's film offered by Critchley and by Silverman, bringing these into a reflective relationship with Heidegger's thought without thereby reducing the meaning of the film to a Heideggerian meta-text, or else foreclosing the question of the relationship between Heidegger and cinema altogether.

Heidegger's general complaint against cinema is that it remains irreducibly "metaphysical" in the sense of only ever being able to present beings in their massive presence. It is beholden to a metaphysical realism

intrinsic to the cinematic image as presenting beings to perception rather than revealing the luminous play between Being and being. Malick's films, I suggest, provide a practical refutation of Heidegger's complaint. *The Thin Red Line* is an enactment of this cinematic *poesis*, revealing different ways in which we can relate to our own mortality, to the finitude of Being, the radiance of Nature, as well as depicting, from multiple character-perspectives, the experiences of loss, of violence, of humanity, and the ethical stance of just letting things be. This showing is enacted not simply at the level of narrative content or visual style; it involves the very capacity of cinema to reawaken different kinds of attunement or mood through sound and image, revealing otherwise concealed aspects—visual, aural, affective, and temporal—of our finite being-in-the-world.

A "Heideggerian" approach to Malick's work can embrace many ways of being, from the thematic and reflexive to the philosophical and poetic. All of these approaches, however, presuppose that we have already considered the question of the nature of the cinematic image and its capacity to provoke thought. Broaching these questions cinematically is one of the remarkable achievements of Malick's *The Thin Red Line*. It performs a cinematic revealing of world, staging the poetic difference between saying and showing, yet also questions our violent mode of dwelling in modernity. It presents a phenomenology of mortality, depicting, through various characters the experiences of anxiety, despair, indifference, violence, and sacrifice that Malick presents as different ways of confronting, or failing to confront, our fundamental finitude as mortal beings. This mortal violence at the heart of nature is a failure to confront our own mortal nature. Only Witt traverses this phenomenological journey from darkness to light, from ignorance and naivety to wisdom and insight. He learns the secret of the immortality he failed to glimpse in his mother's death, the calm *Gelassenheit* that signals the true acknowledgement of one's mortality. Witt's openness to the world—his calm embrace of finitude through visual and tactile releasement—shows that even in the most devastating capacity for destruction there might also be the possibility of ethical transformation, a way of being in which we might experience the joy of "all things shining"⁷.

⁷ My thanks to the participants of the *Heidegger and the Aesthetics of Living* Conference, University of Sydney, December 12-14, 2005, and to Daniel Ross for his many thoughtful comments.

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REFLECTIONS ON HEIDEGGER'S SAYING:
"THE WAY WHAT IS QUESTIONED
ESSENTIALLY ENGAGES OUR QUESTIONING
BELONGS TO THE INNERMOST MEANING
OF THE QUESTION OF BEING"

GEORGE VASSILACOPOULOS

I. Introduction

For Heidegger thinking is "the historical process in which a thinker arises, says his word, and so provides to truth a place within a historical humanity" (Heidegger, 1998: 7) and, of course, in his own case this historical process begins with the question of the meaning of being. Parvis Emad (2002) has recently argued that for the most part commentators have neglected the guiding significance of this question in their appropriations of *Being and Time*. He offers an analysis of the structure of the question with two purposes in mind: the first is to show how commentators have misunderstood Heidegger and the second is to show how the structure of the question of the meaning of being "guides and reaches into Heidegger's hermeneutic efforts which distinguish his fundamental-ontology and being-historical thinking from traditional pre-occupation with being" (Emad, 2002: 15). Whether we take Heidegger's central focus to be the question of being or instead "what brings about being" (Sheehan, 2001: 5), an appreciation of the way in which Heidegger's philosophical project is activated calls for careful consideration of what "belongs to the innermost meaning of the question of being" (Heidegger, 1996: 7). Emad makes the point that "when Heidegger stresses the need for an exposition and conceptualization that are peculiar to being and its meaning he alludes to the language of being". Moreover, "this shows that as early as the analysis of the structure of the question of being Heidegger 'speaks' that language of being" (Emad, 2002: 15). My focus in this paper is to ask: what precisely is it to "speak" this language in an analysis of the structure of the

question of the meaning of being?

My approach is to engage with Heidegger in his own terms in order to clarify some of his more crucial insights that he presents without discussing fully how they spring from the question of being. This is an exercise in what can be termed a disciplined preparation for receiving and recreating the phenomenological text, and for that matter also Heidegger's project after *Being and Time*, in an entirely immanent manner to the fundamental question of being. The analysis of the structure of the question of being shows why and how the thinker must begin the analytic of *Da-sein* with *Da-sein*'s dealings with handy things as a requirement of the radical demands guiding the question of being and it suggests how the question of being guides not only the starting point of the phenomenological text but also the main developmental stages of *Being and Time*. I aim to show that prior to the actual development of *Being and Time* one must be able to arrive at the starting point of the phenomenological text via a process that is informed by the guidance of being as the asked about of the question of being. It is only after moving from the formal question, through a strict analysis of its formal elements, to the concrete world of an understanding of being that everything will have been cleared for a second movement from what is concrete to the concrete recapturing of the question of being. Basically this means that in *Being and Time* thinking moves from one stage to the next immanently to the analytic of *Da-sein* by allowing such immanent development to be guided by the already transcending perspective of the question of the meaning of being and the overall task that the question dictates. The argument forms part of a broader investigation of the radical demands of the question of being as Heidegger poses this question in order to explore the idea that his thought radicalises *Da-sein* at the expense of appreciating the potential radicality of things – a radicality that I would argue depends upon an appreciation of the disclosing power of the property relation understood in Hegelian terms (Nicolacopoulos and Vassilacopoulos, 1999: 16-21).

II.

Heidegger's contention is that his thinking deals with what is fundamental. Dealing with what is fundamental suggests a fundamental encounter with it. The encountering is never simply a result of the coming together of already self-sufficient beings. It is there from the very beginning; or rather it is itself the beginning. What is encountered and the agent of the encounter are made sense of in terms of the encounter itself. This is why

in his most important statement about the question of being – the question being the form of the encounter between being and *Da-sein* – Heidegger draws attention to the interrelation between the asking and the asked about:

[...] there is a notable "relatedness backward or forward" of what is asked about (being) to asking as a mode of being of a being. The way what is questioned essentially engages our questioning belongs to the innermost meaning of the question of being. But this only means that the being that has the character of *Da-sein* has a relation to the question of being itself, perhaps even a distinctive one (Heidegger, 1996: 7-8).

Let us begin by noting that these insights not only emerge within the dynamics of the question of being but they merge with the question. That is, in giving shape to the question they allow the question to emerge and unfold. Heidegger's statement should not be read as an externally derived description but as part of the question's *essential* engagement of the questioned with the corresponding questioning. Accordingly, from the point of view of the *thinker* there is nothing, so to speak, beyond the question, since it is through asking and as asking that "the being that has the character of *Da-sein*" becomes an issue. Everything, including the question as a whole, becomes an issue through the question. Moreover, there is in the question a kind of spontaneity that determines a theoretical vision which is made sense of in terms of the dwelling of the thinker "in" being, that is, according to the challenge that being poses in and through the question of its meaning.

So, the thinker emerges as a thinker insofar as he or she realises that within the framework of the question this challenge is not simply to think in an external and conventional manner. Rather, thinking is determined by the willingness of *Da-sein* to dwell in the question of being, thus allowing the asking to be *fully* determined by what already determines it, namely being as the asked about. Heidegger thus draws our attention to the radical nature of asking, a radicality that emanates exclusively from the encounter with being. In the question of being, asking "loses" its status as a formal faculty of a subject already present to itself and indifferently applied to any "object". In other words, the questioned as questioned is not passive or indifferent to a questioning that exclusively belongs to the subject who might activate it at will. On the contrary, within the framework of the question of being the asking seems to be passive only in the sense that it appears as the "mode of being" of *Da-sein* that emerges through its dwelling in the question of being and its association with being as the asked about. As Heidegger puts it, "asking this question, as a mode of

being of a being, is itself essentially determined by what is asked about in it-being” (Heidegger, 1996: 6). Indeed it is by taking the form of the opening within which being, as the asked about, is already located and becomes accessible that *Da-sein* encounters itself as asking, hence Heidegger’s introduction of *Da-sein* through the mode of being of asking. Accordingly, from the very beginning of its encounter with itself, and because of being’s engagement with *Da-sein*, the *Da* of *Da-sein* as asking, is “being the open” (Sheehan, 2001: 8) that permits being as the asked about to become an issue.

At the same time, *Da-sein* encounters itself in terms of an aim: in so far as it accepts the challenge of being it must become, or embrace what it already is, namely its *Da* as asking. To be (*sein*) its *Da*, that is, to open the opening that *Da* is, becomes its philosophical vision and mission. Let us investigate this last point in more detail since it relates to the task that Heidegger characterises as “the guiding task of working out the question of being” (Heidegger, 1996: 15). Once it becomes available, the question of being itself sets this task given that as the question of being it must be “explicitly formulated and brought to complete clarity concerning itself” (Heidegger, 1996: 5).

Heidegger indicates that once the question of being becomes an issue and generates the framework within which the agent of questioning and what is questioned encounter one another, a further question poses itself. This second question concerns the being that is suited for interrogation for the purposes of “the elaboration of the question of being” (Heidegger, 1996: 5). By “elaboration” Heidegger means the “explicit and lucid formulation of the question of the meaning of being” (Heidegger, 1996: 6). So the concern with this second question relates to the status of the question of being *as question* rather than with the terms of an answer that would take us beyond the question. For, initially, the question of being is given formally and hence in a state of radical incompleteness that conceals its meaning. The formal question of being is only an “assurance”, so to speak, that the question can be actively and concretely asked.

At the same time, the formal question also poses the challenge to be asked. In other words, being as the asked about challenges *Da-sein* that finds itself immediately, and hence passively, in the mode of being of asking, to actively and concretely engage itself in the asking. How does *Da-sein* respond to the challenge of being? Raising the question of the being suited to the interrogation signals *Da-sein*’s acceptance of the challenge of being to which the question of being gives rise. By asking this second question *Da-sein* actively situates itself within the framework of its asking about the meaning of being and thereby posits itself as the

“obvious” candidate for interrogation. More specifically, the question as to the appropriate being for interrogation already incorporates the answer in its very asking simply because it is *Da-sein* that asks the question. That is, in the question of being *Da-sein* is already the agent of asking, which asking is, in turn, already determined by being as the asked about. In other words, in the light of the fact that being is the asked about, being can become an issue as the asked about, and hence make the question of being into an issue, only through the kind of being that is involved in the asking *as asking*, namely *Da-sein* for whom asking is a mode of being.

It follows from this mutually informing encounter that inquiring as to the suitable being for interrogation is the first act of freedom through which *Da-sein* embraces the task of becoming what it already is, namely the agent of questioning in the question of being. This is an act of freedom, not in the conventional sense of choosing amongst a number of available options, but in the sense of taking up the challenge that the question of being poses and thus becoming the active situated-ness, or dwelling, of *Da-sein* in its given relation to being, as its mode of being. This is *Da-sein*'s embracing of its “*Da*”, or its opening, as asking. It is in this way that the formal analysis of the formal question of being points to the need for an “analytic of *Da-sein*” that is “wholly oriented toward the guiding task of working out the question of being” (Heidegger, 1996: 15).

Once the formal structure of the question of being brings *Da-sein* to the fore both as that which is to be interrogated and as that which is *related* to being, thinking immanently to the question of being calls for attention to this relation. Recall from our initial quotation, that Heidegger refers to this relation as the “‘relatedness backward or forward’ of what is asked about (being) to asking as a mode of being of a being” (*Da-sein*). So not only is it the case that *Da-sein*'s interrogation is inseparable from the “relatedness” that Heidegger mentions here but also in guiding us this relatedness is inseparable from the question of being precisely because the question is itself a matter of this relatedness. In other words within the framework of the question of being, to interrogate *Da-sein* is at once to interrogate *Da-sein*'s relatedness to being. As Heidegger notes, “the normative issue is emphatically and solely the experience of There-being with a constant eye to the Being-question” (Richardson, 1963: xviii). If this is indeed the case, then the relatedness of the asked about to the asking, a relatedness that takes the form of a “backward or forward” relating, cannot but involve the question *as a whole*. Let us explore the precise meaning of this involvement in some detail.

Notice firstly that the relation of being as the asked about to *Da-sein* in the mode of being of asking involves a double act of disclosing and

concealing. Being actively and explicitly renders an issue of that which it is, namely concealed or withdrawn. That is, as the asked about, being comes out of its concealment and through the question of being addresses its state as one of concealment. Indeed, in the asking of the question of being what is overcome is not concealment itself but the very concealment of concealment. At least, this is what the question implies in being asked. The question of being treats itself as the “truth” of being’s state of concealment when through the relation between the asked about and the asking it explicitly thematises being’s concealment and treats this thematisation as belonging to being *as concealment*.

This explains why Heidegger makes the point that the question of being (in which, as I have just suggested, being makes its concealment an issue) grows from an understanding of being wherein being is “totally ungraspable”. For, according to Heidegger, the question of being “grows” from an understanding of being that is marked by a lack of conceptualisation of being even if it is “not completely unfamiliar” (Heidegger, 1996: 4):

[...] we are always already involved in an understanding of being. From this grows the explicit question of the meaning of being and the tendency towards its concept (Heidegger, 1996: 4).

Since, an understanding of being neither reveals the meaning of being nor makes explicit the need to deal with the issue of this meaning – the issue that is raised exclusively by the question of being – we should read Heidegger’s direction-giving statement as deriving strictly from the structure of the question of being. Accordingly, from within the structure of the question of being, being must point in two directions, so to speak. Insofar as being explicitly emerges as concealed (in being asked) it relates directly both to its meaning and to its state of concealment. This, I think, is the precise meaning of the statement that “there is a notable ‘relatedness backward or forward’ of what is asked about (being) to asking as a mode of being of a being”. Whereas the question of being gives rise to the state of the disclosing of being’s concealment as concealment, an understanding of being marks being’s implicit or immediate state of concealment or withdrawing.

If this is indeed the case, then already in the initial formulation of the question of being in which the question of being “grows” from an understanding of being an issue arises as to the question’s own presupposition. This issue of a presupposition is not, of course, an issue in the sense of calling for argumentation to demonstrate its validity, but in the sense of traversing a path, of “growing”, in a way that already belongs

to the question of being via the fact of its appearance. Accordingly, the challenge for the thinker is in the enactment of the question out of the reality of an understanding of being. This means that the thinker must remain alert to the guidance of being within the framework of the question of being. Ultimately, it is only through enacting the question in this sense that the formality of the question may be overcome in order to enable *Da-sein* concretely to deal with its mode of being as questioner. More specifically, being's double act of referring directly both to its implicitness and to its disclosure makes possible *Da-sein's* corresponding double act. In other words, when being discloses itself as concealed in the form of the asked about its intimate relation to *Da-sein* in the mode of being of asking also makes *Da-sein's* disclosing possible and necessary. At the same time, being's state of concealment that is identified by being's "backward" relatedness to *Da-sein* makes possible and necessary *Da-sein's* concealment. Somehow the thinker dwells at one and the same time in both the question of being, which is a form of being's disclosing, and in the concrete reality of concealment, that is the reality of an understanding of being. The thinker becomes a thinker by withstanding this tension.

So far I have drawn attention to the mutually informing state of concealment that the relation of being and *Da-sein* discloses within the framework of the question. Following Heidegger we can read the question of the precise nature of this mutually informing state of concealment as a matter of how to gain the appropriate access to *Da-sein*:

[...] the first concern in the question of being must be an analysis of *Da-sein*. But then the problem of gaining and securing the kind of access that leads to *Da-sein* truly becomes crucial. Expressed negatively, no arbitrary idea of being and reality, no matter how "self-evident" it is, may be brought to bear on this being in a dogmatically constructed way; no "categories" prescribed by such ideas may be forced upon *Da-sein* without ontological deliberation. The manner of access and interpretation must indeed be chosen in such a way that this being can show itself to itself on its own terms. And furthermore, this manner should show that being as it is *initially and for the most part in its average everydayness* (Heidegger, 1996: 14-15).

According to Heidegger, this "average everydayness" that is the "correct point of departure of the analytic of *Da-sein*" is "that constitution of being which we call *being-in-the-world*" (Heidegger, 1996: 49). In his effort to interpret the "unified phenomenon" of being-in-the-world ontologically, Heidegger repeatedly emphasises that *Da-sein* is "'(b)eing together with' the world in the sense of being absorbed in the world" (Heidegger, 1996: 51). So he identifies being-in-the-world and the "absorption" of *Da-sein*

in it as the fundamental state of being from which the question of being “grows”. Still, he does not tell us how precisely being-in-the-world manifests the concealment of both being and *Da-sein*. Even though *Being and Time* presents its analysis of being-in-the-world as flowing from the demands posed by the question of being, this process is not articulated in any detail. Heidegger does not say enough about the thinker’s explicit engagement with the question as a fundamental task that precedes the activation of the phenomenological text. What I want to suggest next is that the formal recognition of the task under consideration poses yet another task. Paradoxically, before one can begin to traverse the required path, the structure of the question calls for a preliminary step to be undertaken. If it is indeed the case that the question of being “grows” from “an understanding of being” then it must also be the case that the formal structure of the question itself leads us to the site of this understanding¹. I move now to an elaboration of this process.

III.

What is the meaning of being as the asked about and what is the corresponding meaning of the asking? Turning to the first part of this question note that by asking it we register an interest in providing a formal answer to the formal question of the meaning of being. That is to say, we register an interest in being’s formal meaning that is already presupposed in so far as being performs the role of the asked about. Posed more precisely, the first part of our question is: what is the meaning of being insofar as being makes its meaning an issue within the framework of the question of being?

One obvious strategy in response is to analyse the role that being performs as the asked about. We know that being makes itself an issue as the asked about – being is disclosed as concealed – through engaging with the asking incorporated in the question of being. In other words being is disclosed as questioned in the disclosing provided by the corresponding questioning. Simultaneously, however, and through a reversal of roles due to the mutual informing of the questioned and the questioning, as

¹ On Parvis Emad’s analysis of the structure of the question of being we move from the discovery that the being to be interrogated is situated in an understanding of being to the “conjoined appearance of questioning and understanding of being” and from this we see that being essentially determines questioning and the questioner as the mode of being of a being (Emad, 2002: 20). However, it is not clear from Emad’s discussion how he thinks that the structure of the question renders this visible.

disclosed in the disclosing that asking is, the asked about is transformed into a disclosing in which asking is disclosed. Consequently, both the asked about (being) and the asking (*Da-sein*) function as disclosing and disclosed. The asked about is the asked about and it also *engages* with the asking only if, by being disclosed in asking, it discloses what discloses it, namely asking. Being incorporates into itself the asking by becoming the disclosing of the asking and, as a result, itself *becoming* the asked about as disclosed.

It follows from this line of thinking that, immanent to being, there is a differentiation: being is both disclosed as concealed and disclosing. What is the significance of this? Since it belongs to the essence of the asked about to be disclosed in the disclosing of the asking by engaging with its own disclosing of the asking, what is asked about in the asking, or what is questioned in the question, is disclosing. It is disclosing that, as the disclosing of the asking in the question of being, withdraws and thus transforms itself into the undisclosed disclosing, that is into formal, or empty disclosing. As disclosing of the asking and thus as disclosed in the asking, the asked about that is being as concealed is both as disclosing and as remaining undisclosed in its own disclosing. It is the disclosing that discloses the questioning of itself. Being's self-relation then is a self-withdrawing, a self-emptying. Heidegger refers to the "nothingness of being" (Heidegger, 1996: 6, f*) and to the question of being as the "most universal and the emptiest" (Heidegger, 1996: 35). Below, when we discuss the meaning of the asking we will see precisely how the formality of disclosing is manifested. Here, the point to note is that the disclosing that the asked about is – in disclosing the asking that makes it disclosed as undisclosed – shows itself to be disclosed as *undisclosed disclosing*.

So, the question of the meaning of being is the question of the meaning of disclosing which disclosing makes itself an issue through its own formality, or the active emptying out of itself. The disclosing in question here is pure disclosing, disclosing as such for the reason that, as the asked about, being directly engages with the asking, insofar as it functions as the disclosing of its own questioning. It becomes what it is by actively incorporating into itself what makes it what it is, namely asking. In other words the asked about is the asked about as such, or the concealed as such. As questioned, being belongs to itself, so to speak, and not to something else that might somehow qualify it as questioned through an independent questioning. Because of this, the undisclosed disclosing is disclosing as such, or as I suggested above, formal disclosing. Here then disclosing itself is the asked about. In other words, being engages with questioning because being *is disclosing* and disclosing, as the asked about in the

asking, refers to the meaning of disclosing, that is the disclosing of disclosing; it thus refers to itself as the undisclosed disclosing.

Now if the meaning of the asked about is indeed undisclosed disclosing as such, and if the asking is disclosed as asking in the disclosing provided by the asked about, what is the meaning of the asking? If it is true that asking is disclosed in the disclosing of the asked about, then it must also be the case that asking discloses itself in disclosing the withdrawing of disclosing as such, which withdrawing takes place through the asking. But this suggests that there is a tension here since the asking discloses itself in the withdrawing of disclosing as such that occurs through the asking. How is it possible for asking to relate in a disclosing manner to the “disappearance” of pure disclosing? Heidegger notes that, as the questioner actively asking the question of being, *Da-sein* is “being held out into the nothingness of being, held as a relation” (Heidegger, 1996: 6 f*). I suggested above that being’s withdrawing in the form of the asked about is its self-disclosing. We might think of this as being’s disclosing in the radical sense of disclosing *and* preserving itself in the “nothingness” of its own night, so to speak. Now, as the questioner, *Da-sein* is absolutely claimed by being’s radicality understood as the bearer of this “nothingness”. This is because the withdrawing of pure disclosing takes place in the disclosing that the asking is. Being the site of such withdrawing and thus of disclosing of *pure* disclosing, asking discloses itself as disclosing in the form of radical individuality, that is, in the form of a radically qualified disclosing. This is why Heidegger refers to the being of *Da-sein* as self-concern, or as always being “mine” (Heidegger, 1996: 35). At the same time though, it is the kind of disclosing that is not absorbed in its individuality but has a relation of freedom with it since, as I suggested above, it immanently refers to disclosing as such. Its individuality is the form of being’s “nothingness” in which being as disclosing manifests itself.

Through this reading we can make sense of the following statement that Heidegger makes in the “Introduction” to *Being and Time*:

The question of the meaning of being is the most universal and the emptiest. But at the same time the possibility inheres of its most acute individualisation in each particular *Da-sein* (Heidegger, 1996: 35).

In the asking of the question of being, and as the asking, *Da-sein* discloses its being as disclosing. But whereas being’s disclosing happens as its “nothingness”, *Da-sein*’s disclosing involves *Da-sein*’s being as a whole. As the questioner that belongs to what is questioned, *Da-sein* is posited as the most disclosing, as the disclosed disclosing. Here, in the mode of

being of asking, the essence of *Da-sein* is revealed as disclosing in the sense of actively engaging with disclosing as such. Despite its formality from the outset being uncompromisingly claims *Da-sein*. The asking of the question of being implicates the whole of the questioner's being. The question of being can be concretely asked by *Da-sein* only if it radically involves the totality of *Da-sein's* being in the concreteness of its individuality.

It follows that a proper reconstruction of the question of the meaning of being, one that takes us from its formal formulation to its concrete development, must involve the structure of *Da-sein's* disclosing as a whole. Here then, in the formal formulation of the question of the meaning of being, we can already identify one of the major tasks of *Being and Time*, namely coming to terms with *Da-sein's* being as a whole. One must come to terms with the meaning of *Da-sein's* disclosing, since this disclosing, and with respect to its being disclosed in disclosing as such, discloses itself only if its meaning becomes available. The question of being can be asked concretely if *Da-sein* already has the answer to the question of the meaning of *Da-sein's* being. This task is worked out in "Division Two" of *Being and Time*, and Heidegger refers to it as the "primordial interpretation of the meaning of being of *Da-sein*" (Heidegger, 1996: 216).

Still, we are left with the question of from where *Da-sein* might derive the meaning of its being or the meaning of its disclosing. The interrogation of this disclosing guided by what being demands in the question of being supplies the answer. Guided by the aim of coming to terms with its being as a whole, *Da-sein* needs its being in order to create its meaning out of it as a pre-condition for fully engaging with the question of being as the questioner. Still the task of interrogating *Da-sein's* being in order to extract its meaning through a "primordial interpretation" already points to the state of *Da-sein's* "understanding" of being in which, as participants in the question of being, both being and *Da-sein* withdraw.

IV.

Although we have moved some way toward the point of activation of the concrete phenomenological process of the analytic of *Da-sein*, our elaboration of the question of being has not yet brought us to this point of departure. Even though, as that from which its meaning will be extracted in a self-interpreting manner, *Da-sein's* being manifests the withdrawing of the question out of which the question "grows", this manifestation is not

yet radical enough because it does not capture what the question of being demands, namely, the withdrawing of *Da-sein's* being as a whole. If this is indeed required, a further step that would lead us to the state of withdrawing, not just of *Da-sein's* meaning but of *Da-sein's* being as well, is warranted here. Let us consider where and how this withdrawing is manifested.

We know from our analysis of *Da-sein's* encounter with being in the asking of the question of the meaning of being that *Da-sein's* being is disclosing. Bearing in mind that Heidegger refers to *Da-sein* as self-concern given that *Da-sein's* being is always “mine” (Heidegger, 1996: 35) we can ask: what precisely is involved in this disclosing for the being whose essence it is to be concerned with its being in its being? Now the characteristic of *Da-sein's* concern is that it contributes ontologically to that about which it is concerned. From this it follows, rather dramatically, that *Da-sein* withdraws in its concern as concern when its concern is directed to something other than *Da-sein*, in a way that *Da-sein's* concern with it directly contributes to this other's being. Here *Da-sein's* concern needs to be directed elsewhere than to *Da-sein*. This calls for an object to which *Da-sein* is related in a way that takes one beyond the metaphysics of the subject/object dichotomy. This non-metaphysical encounter must disclose the being of the object in and through *Da-sein's* concern. That is to say, it must disclose it, not as something that pre-exists its encounter with *Da-sein*, but as something that takes shape in the very act of *Da-sein's* concern.

In and as this act of concern the object's being is made explicit as non-concern. No-concern and concern thus merge into a mutual non-reflective belonging. The object's being becomes an issue through the non-becoming of an issue of *Da-sein's* being. In such an encounter *Da-sein* is concerned, without however encountering its concern in the sense of coming back to itself, so to speak. Consequently, in its concern with beings other than itself, *Da-sein's* whole being is involved without *Da-sein* being its whole. *Da-sein's* being is completely withdrawn, or “absorbed”, in *Da-sein's* concern with beings other than itself. It is withdrawn in that its withdrawing is itself withdrawn. Here, of course, we can refer to *Da-sein's* preoccupation with the handiness of handy things and to the instrumentality of the instrument (Marion, 1991: 237) forming part of being-in-the-world, and whose analysis marks the initial developmental stages of *Being and Time*. Accordingly, the thinker begins the analytic of *Da-sein* with *Da-sein's* dealings with equipment, not because this is what is most obviously and naturally observable around him or her, but because

this is strictly warranted by the radical demands guiding the question of being.

This said, having an appreciation of *Da-sein*'s withdrawing in its dealings with handy things is only one aspect of the withdrawing of the question of being. As already suggested, the other aspect is the withdrawing of being itself. The concealment of *Da-sein*'s individual disclosing must be linked to the concealment of disclosing as such. Recall that we need to try to think the site of both the withdrawing of being and that of *Da-sein*'s being as a whole in concrete terms. Along with the meaning of *Da-sein*'s "absorption" in its dealings with handy things, what else do we need to know in order to appreciate the withdrawing of being? Given that, as suggested above, being is disclosing as such whose withdrawing takes place in the individualised disclosing of *Da-sein*, in its concrete dealings with handy things *Da-sein* already incorporates such withdrawing for it is already equipped with an understanding of being in the terms we discussed in the previous section. Basically what this means is that before engaging with specific handy things *Da-sein* already refers itself to the totality of handy things. In other words, through its *Da-sein* refers to the totality of potential dealings with things; it refers to the "world" as the network of such dealings. As being-in-the-world *Da-sein* has always already detached itself from individual entities as a precondition for encountering them. *Da-sein* has access to handiness as such which cannot simply be reduced to the handiness of individual entities. Handiness relates to the entities' situatedness in the world of entities and access to this world makes it possible for *Da-sein* both to encounter individual entities and not to exhaust itself in particular encounters. *Da-sein* is an inexhaustible source of encountering given its being-in-the-world and the entities' referential status.

If this is correct, then an adequate appreciation of the withdrawing of being and *Da-sein* involves an appreciation of *Da-sein* as being-in-the-world. At the same time, it also involves an appreciation of the equally fundamental *plurality* of *Da-seins*. As with everything else in our analysis so far, we can derive the fact that in the world *Da-sein* deals with other *Da-seins* directly from the demands of the question of being. As we noted above, Heidegger introduces this plurality in referring to each particular *Da-sein* (Heidegger, 1996: 35). The essence of *Da-sein* is not only for its disclosing to be individual but also for its being to be particular. Why? Given that what withdraws is being as pure disclosing, and that its withdrawing takes place in disclosing, being breaks up, so to speak, into a potentially infinite number of individualised units of disclosing, that is, into a plurality of *Da-seins*, the "they". Potentially, every one of these

Da-seins might ask the question of being. Yet actually asking it requires radicalising *Da-sein*'s individuality by transcending the state of the "they" in the way that Heidegger attempts in *Being and Time*.

If our analysis so far has merit, it follows that in the developmental momentum of the thinker's engagement with being-in-the-world, the next radical step is the liberation of *Da-sein*'s being from its "absorption" in the world (Heidegger, 1996: 51). This raises the question of how one moves from a perspective internal, so to speak, to the withdrawing of *Da-sein*'s being as concern in its dealings with entities, to concern itself? The task that the question of being dictates here is for *Da-sein* to return to itself by ridding itself of its being's withdrawing that is registered in the encounter with beings other than *Da-sein*. This task has two aspects or moments: *Da-sein* needs to liberate itself and, at the same time, to locate from within the site of its liberation the fundamentals of its being. Given *Da-sein*'s radical "absorption" in the world, such liberation could only be achieved through an equally radical crisis. This crisis would need to be powerful enough to disconnect *Da-sein*'s being from this association with the world by turning violently against its withdrawing in the world. This can be achieved only if it is possible for *Da-sein* to incorporate into itself the no-concern that belongs to the being of entities and to associate this with its concern. In other words, *Da-sein* must be in a position to liberate its being from entities as the being that it is by showing that this being is the no-concern of concern. Consequently, it must make its being withdraw as a precondition for being disclosed as disclosing from within itself. The no-concern of concern is expressed by *Angst* whose radicality, as Heidegger suggests, is expressed in the fact that it has no particular object. For this reason *Angst* introduces a fundamental change of direction in the development of *Being and Time*, one that is more radical than that between "Division One" and "Division Two".

I have argued that for its initial and fundamental disclosing *Da-sein* is guided by being and being guides itself through what it provides to *Da-sein* since asking emanates from the asked about which asked about comes to be in the enactment of the asking. This appearance of being in the form of the asked about, and its role in the question of being, is what *Being and Time*, and for that matter the whole of Heidegger's project, requires for its activation. Precisely because we gain access to being as that which is asked about through the question of the meaning of being it is the formal structure of the question that reflectively situates us in an understanding of being and in being's guiding significance.

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ART, TRUTH AND FREEDOM: CONTEMPLATING HEIDEGGER'S CATEGORIAL VISION

COLIN HEARFIELD

A. Categorical Vision

Categorical vision may seem a strange, if not erroneous way of naming the manner in which Heidegger discloses the ontological essence of art, truth and freedom. For with Heidegger, the term "categorical" pertains solely to the ontological characteristics of things present-at-hand (Heidegger, 1962a: 79); that is, things which remain categorially distinct from the temporal structures or "existentialia" of *Dasein*. Furthermore, categorial vision is usually associated with Husserl's scientifically nuanced phenomenology concerning the intuited revelation of objective essences beyond the psychological relativism of subjectively constituted facts. Yet Heidegger's ontology of Being, despite its more poetic, hermeneutic mode of thinking, is nonetheless closely modeled on Husserl's anti-idealist attempt to overcome the intractable dualism of subject/object relations through the categorial vision of pre-reflective essences. Both are concerned with dismantling the transcendental conditions of categorial or conceptual identity, what Heidegger refers to as the metaphysics of presence dominant since Plato.

The aporia of a finitely constituted yet infinitely constituting transcendental subject blocks the path to an intuitive, categorial vision of the truth of what is. Accordingly, for both Husserl and Heidegger, what is imperative in this process is to allow what is other, the things themselves, to speak for themselves. This becomes possible, at least for Heidegger, in an appreciation of the ontological difference between being and not-being, in the fact that what is is rather than is not. Now insofar as the vision of the essential truth of being emerges from this unprovocative letting-be of what is and gives it projective expression then it is categorial. This claim may be set in relief by way of brief reference to Kant's transcendental schematism. Without delving into the imagistic complexities of these

transcendental schemata, suffice it to say that such schemata are the intuited products of a transcendental imagination. They are that which make possible the synthetic and so categorical application of concepts to objects intuited in space and time. While refusing the transcendental character of Kant's schematism, Husserl and Heidegger nevertheless invoke a categorical schematism, more in keeping, according to Adorno, with the manner "in which Kant thought of our senses as affected by transcendent things-in-themselves" (Adorno, 1940: 16).

B. Truth and Art

In his later *Letter on Humanism*, Heidegger is expressly critical of lingering metaphysical modes of thinking in *Being and Time*, indicating that Being had not yet been thought in terms of its own temporal/historical dimensions (Heidegger, 1962b: 280). This means that Being needs to be thought not so much through the ahistorical historicity or temporal "existentialia" of *Dasein* but rather through those things present-at-hand which bestow on people a particular historical task or outlook. And for Heidegger that historical endowment, or what he also refers to as "the way in which truth comes into being" (Heidegger, 1971: 78), occurs pre-eminently through exemplary works of art. Heidegger indicates the manner in which he sees the essential belonging together of art and history in the following words:

Whenever art happens – that is, whenever there is a beginning – a thrust enters history, history either begins or starts over again. History means here not a sequence in time of events of whatever sort, however important. History is the transporting of a people into its appointed task as entrance into that people's endowment. [...] Art is history in the essential sense that it grounds history (Heidegger, 1971: 77).

Now this vision of art as the essential ground of history is not to be confounded, Heidegger later notes, with the traditional idea of art as a form of cultural achievement or manifestation of spirit. Rather, as the essential ground of history, art is that through which Being discloses its appropriation of truth over and against its historical oblivion in the techno-metaphysical rationality of the constituting subject.

Techno-metaphysical rationality, what Heidegger also refers to as the metaphysics of presence, has staked out a number of claims concerning the thingness of a thing, or the truth of what is, none of which, however, allow the thing to appear in its "independent and self-contained character" (Heidegger, 1971: 25). That the thing is a substance with various

properties, that it is the unity of a manifold of sensations, or that it is a synthesis of matter and form, all these modes of apprehending the truth of a thing effectively distort that truth through the mediating idea of scientific correctness. Heidegger contrasts this with the mere contemplation of a pair of peasant shoes in Van Gogh's well-known painting. In pondering their practical use, or what Heidegger calls their equipmentality, the essential truth of those shoes, namely their reliability, unexpectedly comes to light in an intuitive vision. As Heidegger puts it, "this painting spoke" (Heidegger, 1971: 35). And so while we are no closer to knowing the "thingly character" (Heidegger, 1971: *ibid.*) of the shoes, what they are in themselves, we do know there is a disclosure of truth happening in the work. Hence what is represented in the art-work is not just a representation of some-thing, but rather "the thing's general essence" (Heidegger, 1971: 37). The question then becomes, how does truth "set itself to work" in the work of art such that there is a "happening of truth" in the work (Heidegger, 1971: 36, 38)?

In response to this question Heidegger turns to a specifically non-representational work of art, namely an ancient Greek temple. Apart from extrapolating more fully the categorial schemata of how truth happens in the work of art, what, we might ask, is the significance of this shift? This question arises in view of comments made in the epilogue to "The Origin" essay. Here Heidegger signals a cautious accord with Hegel's thesis that works of art, following the neo-Classical period, are no longer sites where truth occurs. In light of the passage previously cited, this means, more specifically for Heidegger, that modern art does not ground history. It may thus seem odd that Heidegger takes the painting of the peasant shoes by Van Gogh, clearly a modernist work, as a site where the essential being of those shoes comes to be intuited. While this remains perplexing, it is not an issue I intend to pursue, at least for the moment. What it does indicate, however, is that Heidegger's turn to the Greek temple occurs from the perspective of it not being a modern work of art. Moreover, it is a turn to what Heidegger regards as a great work of art, insofar as great works, unlike modern works, are the revealed truth of a people's historical destiny. This distinction between great and modern works of art may be further elucidated by way of reference to aesthetics. For aesthetic judgement, in Heidegger's view, arises as a post-script to the death of great art, first evident in post-Hellenic Greece (Heidegger, 1979-1987: 80), particularly with Plato and again in the aftermath of European neo-Classicism, with Kant. Aesthetics participates in the metaphysics of presence, in a synthesis of form and matter, where, for Kant at least, taste is the singular condition of beauty and art the work of genius. Aesthetics

thus remains unable to think the essential truth of art as the historical shaping of community. Heidegger, however, also perceives signs of a distinctly non-aesthetic, non-metaphysical approach to art in both Plato and Kant; and it is precisely this attempt to clarify what might constitute a non-aesthetic approach to art which motivates "The Origin" essay (Bernstein, 1992: 131).

Heidegger's account of the happening of truth in the Greek temple is prefaced on Plato's view of the beautiful. And Heidegger interprets Plato's view of the beautiful in the following manner; he states:

[t]he beautiful is what advances most directly upon us and captivates us. While encountering us as a being, however, it at the same time liberates us to the view upon Being. The beautiful is an element which is disparate within itself; it grants entry into immediate sensuous appearances and yet at the same time soars towards Being; it is both captivating and liberating. Hence it is the beautiful that snatches us from oblivion of Being and grants the view upon Being (Heidegger, 1979-1987: 196).

This "felicitous discordance" between being and presence is again evident in Kant's assertion that what is beautiful comes to us in a judgement of disinterested delight. Again in Heidegger's words:

Comportment toward the beautiful as such, says Kant, is *unconstrained favoring*. We must release what encounters us as such to its way to be; we must allow and grant it what belongs to it and what it brings to us (Heidegger, 1979-1987: 109 [Heidegger's italics]).

Heidegger translates what is at stake in both passages as the event of unconcealing, the revealing of the truth of the work in an intuited vision of beauty; albeit a beauty which changes with the changing nature of history and truth. The manner in which this unconcealing vision becomes possible is nonetheless dependent on certain categorical schemata; not those produced in the transcendental imagination of the genius-artist, however, but those produced in the "illuminating projection" or "projective saying" of the great work itself. In the context of his claim that all art is essentially poetry, Heidegger says:

Projective saying is [...] the saying of world and earth, the saying of the arena of their conflict and thus of the place of all nearness and remoteness of the gods. [...] Projective saying is saying which in preparing the sayable, simultaneously brings the unsayable as such into a world. In such saying, the concepts of an historical people's nature, i.e., of its belonging to world history, are formed for that folk, before it [...]. Such saying is a

projecting of the clearing, in which announcement is made of what it is that beings come into the Open *as* (Heidegger, 1971: 73-74).

This now gives us an initial glimpse into our earlier unanswered question as to how truth sets itself to work in the Greek temple. Indeed "the lighting projection of truth" (Heidegger, 1971: 73) occurs precisely as those categorial schemata present in the work, namely "the setting up of a world and the setting forth of earth" (Heidegger, 1971: 48).

Setting up a world is the opening of a clearing, which grants passage to an understanding of beings we are not and of our own essential being. This opening or "lighting" is in varying degrees an unconcealing of the historical scope of a people's destiny. For a work to set up a world, however, it must do so through earthly materials, which, whether stone, wood, pigment or linguistic utterance, all pertain to the setting forth of earth in the work. In setting forth the earth, the work sets itself back on the self-dependent yet self-secluding character of earth. As self-secluding, earth remains in some measure a concealing of both itself and what we encounter in the world opening before us. This concealing concerns a limit or refusal of knowledge beyond the historical clearing opened by the work as well as a dissembling of truth where what appears in the clearing is at times deceptive or obscured by other beings in the clearing. Without being wholly reduced to untruth, earth is nevertheless the source of untruth. Insofar as setting up a world is dependent on the setting forth of earth, then this double concealment is itself a condition and limit of the unconcealing happening in the work. The manner in which truth sets itself to work in the great work of art now reveals itself as a constant striving of earth and world against the other; a battle between what is concealing and unconcealing, between the absence and presence of truth.

The question, however, of how truth establishes itself or makes itself known in the "primal conflict" (Heidegger, 1971: 60) of world and earth remains unanswered. Truth is established or brought forth, Heidegger indicates, when earth and world "move apart because of [their conflict]" (Heidegger, 1971: 61). What is brought forth in this opening is the specific createdness of the work; a truth which itself engenders the conflict of earth and world and which stands fixed in the figure or shape of that conflict as the work's createdness. The schematic image of this establishment of truth as the createdness of the work is articulated as rift.

This rift carries the opponents into the source of their unity by virtue of their common ground. It is a basic design, an outline sketch, that draws the basic feature of the rise of the lighting of beings. This rift does not let the opponents break apart; it brings the opposition of measure and boundary into their common outline (Heidegger, 1971: 63).

The rift, then, establishes the intimate belonging together of earth and world within their difference. As the schematic image of a work's self-appropriating createdness, the rift "must be set back into the earth" (Heidegger, 1971: 64). For only in this way, Heidegger continues, will the work's createdness stand out from what is created in the work. The rift-design, as Bernstein indicates, is Heidegger's displacement of the potentiality for the schemata of world and earth away from the transcendental imagination of Kant's genius-artist to the work of art itself (Bernstein, 1992: 122). Indeed the schemata of world and earth made possible by the rift-design are the categorical transfiguration of Kant's transcendental aesthetic schemata of form and matter (Bernstein, 1992: 118). While both situate the hidden origin of this schematic design in earth/nature, for Heidegger it does not manifest in the transcendental imagination of the artist but rather in the createdness of the work itself (Heidegger, 1971: 70).

C. Art and Freedom

The truth of the work of art is preserved by those who, as Heidegger puts it, resolutely stand-within "the extraordinary awesomeness of the truth that is happening in the work" (Heidegger, 1971: 68). Standing-within, as Heidegger reiterates with reference to *Being and Time*, is the "entrance into and compliance with the unconcealedness of Being" (Heidegger, 1971: 67); or what, in the context of the "The Origin" essay, is at once an entrance into and compliance with the historical truth grounded in the work. Resoluteness, as Heidegger also reminds us, is "the opening up of a human being, out of its captivity in that which is, to the openness of Being" (Heidegger, 1971: *ibid.*). Compliance and release from captivity, like earth and world, here strive the one against the other in what now appears, however, as a paralyzing ambiguity concerning our place in the historical opening of truth in the art-work. Indeed Heidegger speaks of the vision of a work's truth as a "standing within the conflict that the work has fitted into the rift" (Heidegger, 1971: 68). Standing-within the historical destiny given voice in the work is at once, however, and more essentially, a standing-out of the affiliated community of preservers from the unconcealing truth, the historically legislative authority of the work. Freedom is the freedom to comply with "a destiny always already sent" (Bernstein, 1992: 128); to a destiny already occurring within our midst, and yet always behind our backs. Bernstein makes the further point that while "[reliant] on the modern experience that connects freedom and history" (Bernstein, 1992: *ibid.*), Heidegger's emphasis on the unconcealing

truth made possible in pre-aesthetic works paradoxically suppresses the critically creative thrust of modern aesthetic works. Moreover, the historical destiny revealed in great art is no longer that of the modern world, which leaves us wondering to what extent modern aesthetic works, for Heidegger, could ever critically reveal the demise of *poiesis* in the technological enframing of modern social relations of production. The absent presence of Being in the modern epoch may have some affinity with what Adorno perceived as an absent politics, however, it is precisely autonomous works of modern art, Adorno argues, which make that critically evident.

In the pre-reflective ontological difference between our being and not-being, between artists/preservers and art as Being, Heidegger abrogates any mediation of our historical destiny through the critical reflections of a community of subjects. Despite the claim to an epochal philosophy of history, Being as art remains hypostatized in a transcendent realm beyond the grasp of any mediating judgement. Yet such a judgement would seem implicit in the very postulation of Being *qua* Being. The reflective spontaneity of thought which names the essential Being of beings is nonetheless passed off as the schematic vision of a transcendent thing-in-itself. No less immediate than the categorial character of things present-at-hand, Being thereby reveals itself as an isolated "categorial fact, offered in alleged purity and raised to the supreme formula" (Adorno, 1973: 81). Heidegger constructs this hermeneutic transfer on the basis of an indeterminate difference, prevalent in pre-Socratic philosophy, between the ontic immediacy of things present-at-hand (τοδε τι) and the essential presence (ουσια) of that being. By way of this indeterminate inter-change, this hermeneutic circle, Heidegger dispenses with synthetic judgements and what he considers their mediating violation of things present-at-hand. Heidegger's ontology thereby manifests an affinity with the scientific positivism of which it nevertheless purports to be the critical, pre-reflective essence. Equally, Heidegger's quasi-theological faith in Being suggests an affinity with the incontrovertible certainties of religious belief. Seen in this light, Heidegger's doctrine of categorial vision emerges as an absolute objectivism; a realism all the more abstract and ideal the less it concedes the mediating transmissions of a self-reflective subject.

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THE WORK AND THE PROMISE OF TECHNOLOGY

JOHN DALTON

The idea becomes a machine that makes the art.
—LeWitt, *Paragraphs on Conceptual Art*

The theme of “Heidegger and the aesthetics of living” recalls Le Corbusier’s most famous architectural proclamation—“*Une maison est une machine-à-habiter*”. “Language is the house of being” is perhaps also Heidegger’s unqualified rejoinder to the modernist champion of mass production and humanist *urbanisme*. We could also recall Le Corbusier’s statement: “to create architecture is to put in order. Put what in order? Function and objects.” Heidegger’s contempt may have been palpable¹. Despite this, Le Corbusier’s injunction remains compelling. In the fifth book of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle writes: “arts (τέχναι) are also called “beginnings” (ἀρχαί), especially the architectonic arts”. Prior to *mimesis*, the function (*ergon*) that is put into order is given the place of a beginning, a space to be. The making of an origin—the spacing of an event, the emergence of something new—gives contour to an ontology of technics that thinks from the event of *techne*, or as the present work will attempt to outline, from the *techne* of the event². To this end, Heidegger’s thinking of

¹ Though according to Young, despite Heidegger’s general disdain for modern art as intergrated into the destitution of modern techno-science, he is said to have had a “great love” and high esteem for Le Corbusier, alongside a range of other modern artists and figures. At any rate, an examination must await another occasion. See Julian Young, *Heidegger’s Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

² Technics and technology are not synonymous. Technics (*Techne*, “la technique”, “die Technik”) refers to the meaning or *Wesen* of technology, while technology refers to artefacts or domains of technical action (industry, science, linguistics, cyberspace, digital media, etc). These objects or domains need not be mechanistic, digital, etc., but are formed or structured by a logistics that is “technical” (e.g., analytic language). However, this model of technics is derived from technology. The thinking of technics here is technics as repetition/iteration, and so does not

art and technology can be rehearsed so as to fashion, in outline at least, an alternative account of technics. The reading here will critically address an “originary technicity” as developed by Stiegler. It will be necessary to touch upon certain moments of Heidegger’s relation to Aristotle, as well as revise the problem of modern aesthetics so as to finally arrive at a thinking of technics irreducible to, yet the condition of, history and politics³.

Between an “aesthetics” of life and a “machine for living” lies the purported discordance of the human and the technical, the organic and the artificial. Yet it is no longer controversial to insist that biogenesis is as much “natural” or given as it is coded and architectonic. Forms of repetition—whether evolutionary, improvised, performative, structural—remain the possibility of both life and machine. The body, self and other, reflexivity, “spirit”, language and meaning, may be admitted to the economic-technical systems of difference, and accordingly, to a *techne* of form that entails a temporal *logistics or calculation of variable reproducibility*.

What then determines the typological difference—conceptual, historical, essential—between the human and the technical? A desire to preserve—or invent—the excellence of humanity beyond or without calculation, to sustain humanity as the self-affirming transcendence of the exemplary? If technics is on the side of life, it is as the figure of the prosthesis that technics signifies the incompleteness and incapacity of *anthropos*. Technics is therefore on the side of death and finitude, and would itself promote the desire for the unicity of humanism. Technics, though, is also the possibility of the human. Technics is not reducible to the tool, but must be thought of as iteration and code.

The distinction between art and aesthetics remains dominated by the concept of humanism and the ethico-political consensus required by the concept of “political community” (*sensus communis*). If art is aligned with freedom, the aesthetic is but the memory of this freedom. Art becomes the place of truth for a subject once it has assumed the sign of ontological alienation. The aesthetic becomes the problem of judgement—what is “art”? In turn, this question is the mimetic of the self-defining subject—

presuppose any model or historical type of technology (the “type” itself presupposing the problem of iteration).

³ Much has omitted from the reading, however. Despite the evident threads, it is not possible to rehearse Lacoue-Labarthe’s writings on form, the figure, and mimesis, nor less cover Benjamin on technical reproducibility. Likewise, the theme of the work in German Romanticism—crucial for understanding Heidegger’s thinking of the artwork—must also be left aside.

the question of how to form and judge oneself as a “who” among a “we”? Already too late, the aesthetic saves itself by way of a recursive fixation with its own epistemological crisis. Aesthetics becomes critique of aesthetics, sustaining itself in the dialectic of judgement wherein art and literature become the apologists for philosophy’s (Idealism’s) finitude. Aesthetics figure the redemptive unity of art and life for which it prophetically longs, yet interminably defers. For the Heidegger of *The Origin of the Work of Art*, aesthetics forecloses its own ontological dimension. The end of art is the loss of art as a historically meaningful way of being. The frame for the later thinking of art and technics can be found as early as the 1936-1938 *Beiträge* (as well as the *Nietzsche* lectures, which cannot be addressed here). The decision for art becomes again one of historical necessity and recovery—“whether art is an exhibition for lived experience (*Erleben*) or the setting-into-work of truth” (Heidegger, 1999: 63).

As a reflective judgement in search of its concept, the aesthetic signifies the form of finality apart from the representation of an end. Yet the contrary is affirmed. Art becomes a moral-politics insofar as it assumes the legislative form of judgement. As a “philosophy” of art, aesthetics is concerned with the condition of the possibility and the limits of the concept of “art”. We are immediately engaged in the Kantian problematic. Human reason, Kant insists, is by nature architectonic. If the schematism should translate categories of understanding into forms intuitable by sensibility, the architectonic falters on the very Idea of the subject. The subject is but the regulative Idea of the unity of its own representations. The Kantian aesthetic is rather the crisis of the presentation of the Idea of the subject. Art gives an adequate presentation of the Idea only on the basis of the relation between judgement and transcendental imagination (*Einbildungskraft*). Yet aesthetic judgement lacks a concept. Understanding and sensibility can only achieve a unity through the external form of consensus—through the Idea of nature as purposive yet represented by the form of a historical community. The aesthetic is a formative work, and thereby, technical (this, it should be noted, leads into Romanticism and the themes of aesthetic education and the state as a work of art)⁴. Art becomes the *ergon* of the unique and redemptive expression of life or matter. As the technical prosthesis of redemption, aesthetics becomes the *via negativa* of representation, the figure of alienated modernity. Another thinking of technics may, on the

⁴ To pursue these themes in the detail they require, see J.M Bernstein, *The Fate of Art* (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992).

contrary, displace the theme of alienation and locate in technics and technology the possibility of ethics and aesthetics.

We can begin to rethink technology by attempting to address its ontological form. To risk simplification, technology may be posited as the very figure of futurity. Technology stands out as technology on the basis of its temporality—it promises or threatens the future. A thinking of how technology temporalizes provides access to the ontology of technics. Technology certainly confronts us with our own finitude. The future will be more technologically sophisticated than the present. Technology will be revised, updated, outdone. This, however, remains thinkable within the *existential* of anticipation (as do both the concept and the critique of progress). Another thinking of technics needs to account for the technicity of anticipation itself. To think technology on the basis of an originary technics requires engaging with technics as an ontological, or rather, pre-ontological term. The account, however, faces a significant challenge. Technics itself, as the condition of time, has no intentional temporality. Technics itself is neither anticipatory nor mnemonic.

The necessary condition of both art and technology is repetition. Technology is never the absolutely unique or irreplaceable, but is repeatable and changeable. This is precisely true of language, meaning, any system or code of signification or text. Only what can “be” is what can be repeated, what can signify, if nothing else, its own repeatability. What “is” is what *always already* signifies, and signifies prior to intention or consciousness (and consciousness, the I, as modes of self-reflection are forms of reflective repeatability, the re-presentation of experience, etc). What “is” signifies its own finitude (that it comes and goes) prior to denoting any referent or meaning. This “always already” given sign of finitude is a potentiality: what “is” is what may repeat its own form in future variation (this variability affirms the *différance* between the finite and the infinite: neither a given finitude nor a determined infinity, repetition invents itself as the “aporia of the origin”). This much situates Derrida’s thinking of the *gramme*, iterability and supplementarity, the general economy of the text and *différance*, as the forms of technics as such.

The question then emerges of the “originary” status of technics and technology. We can say—and only in the most preparatory fashion—that technics temporalises time on the basis of repetition. Yet the temporality of repetition remains undecidable. Whereas in the substantial form of the individual *Dasein* or subject, memory certainly addresses the future, and where substantial technology is indeed a system of prediction and calculation, the repeatable action or predictable effect, technology

absolutely addresses futurity. *Technics*, we may say, is precisely a means or form through which time becomes meaningful. Yet repetition is not itself a *physis*. Repetition does not unfold a potentiality that is self-presenting or self-interpreting, and so cannot be thought of on the model of *Ereignis* or *es gibt*. In-itself, repetition is meaningless. Repetition has no intentional direction. It does not redeem itself according an end that would gather and constitute a *telos*. *What* or *who* repeats or is repeated, and in what *form* and *when*, is the question of technology (and in turn, the question of a discursive *politics* of technics). How we understand substantive technology (tools, computers, logic, any system of calculation) traces the pre-ontological form of technics as a system of (in)finite repetition. For this reason, a thinking of the temporalization of technics can only take place within the factual and historical interpretation of technology, yet must also delimit and exceed historical categories in order to properly approach an “originary technics”, or rather, a “potentiality of *techné*” that is itself irreducible to a horizon of meaning.

The critique of technology as the devastation of the “here and now” or the rendering of time as a fitful and impoverished set of distractions, or the domination of calculated clock-time, remains the consequence of a critical thinking that fatefully preserves the default or fault of being and the moral-aesthetico-political project of the critique of modernity; that modernity is at fault, that our condition is indeed that of a technological (metaphysical) planetary nihilism (a theme whose vocabulary regularly intones a quasi-apocalyptic anxiety). It is necessary to distinguish a research into the critical potential of technics from the worn critique of rationalization, industrial society and consumerism. The repetition-compulsion of the negative dialectic of modernity and the theoretical-political mourning play of the once-again traumatized subject must be discarded. Another thinking of the technicity of repetition and finitude is required (such that we find in Stiegler, though Stiegler remains within this problematic). The “problem” of technology is the status and meaning of any possible “humanity”. Again, a qualification is necessary. This is not to reduce technics to a politics of humanism, casting technics once again as the inhuman other of a familiar humanist narcissism. Nor is it to rehearse the refrain of a hyper-technological post-modernity. What needs to be addressed is the philosophical-political form of the *inter-relation* of the human *and* the technical and the form in which technics becomes thinkable.

The general critique of modern technology holds that technology and technical systems represent a crisis of decision. Technology presents us with a power of calculation and rationalisation commensurate with

destructive exploitation and objectification. To more define the problem of modern technology, we can thematise technology as addressing the very possibility of *decision itself, the decision for decision*. The *meaning* of technology is not found in an ability (to transform, to free) or an incapacity (the loss of humanity, the forgetting of being), but in its potential *to make possible the place of decision*—that technology today presents us with a decision for our own future and continuity. Yet every decision and every event of responsibility presupposes a relation of the calculable to the incalculable. *Decision is already a technics*. The decision for decision is not only the problem of the *techne* of how to decide or judge, but the problem of the facticity of decision itself, how “we” understand ourselves in the *form* of a “we”. Technology is said to deprive us of decision, transforming spontaneity and freedom into *automata*. In a deterministic fashion, technology would decide for us, in place of us, deciding without deciding in programmatic, ritualized manner (yet without spirit), rational yet without reason. Technology today bears upon the very possibility of facticity and the available forms of decision and responsibility, political meaning and ethical sense. It is, accordingly, from out of and against the Heideggerian “questioning” of technology that an alternative presents itself—a technics that is not limited by epochality, and therefore, reducible to the history of metaphysics, and in turn the critique of modernity. If “decision” itself, and by extension, the “humanity” of decision is already a technics, a calculation, this dramatically engages the exigency to think and rethink the question of technology.

Art and Technics

Before engaging more fully with Heidegger’s thinking of art and technology, it is necessary to clarify the early Heidegger’s ontological project. Heidegger takes over Aristotelian categories where they offer a proto-phenomenological standpoint without the form of the modern subject⁵. Here, *kinesis* is the most significant. *Kinesis* is the possibility of *Dasein*’s transcendence. *Dasein* is both ahead itself and ahead of entities (always already being out ahead—*Immer-schon-vorweg-sein*) as the

⁵ It is not possible to offer a detailed or historico-philosophical account here of Heidegger’s relation to Aristotle—rather, certain general or structural features of both early and later Heidegger can be addressed. For good accounts of Heidegger’s relation to Aristotle, see Ted Sadler, *Heidegger and Aristotle: the Question of Being* (London and New Jersey: Athlone, 1996) and Walter A. Brogan, *Heidegger and Aristotle* (Buffalo: State University of New York Press, 2006).

possibility of the disclosure of possibility. In disclosing a being “as” a being, the hermeneutical “as-structure” is thought first of all a mode of *kinesis* rather than substance, presence, or actuality. It is a “nullity” or absence that clears the space for which beings can be as beings of a certain kind and within a “world” of significance. *Dasein* is the “there” or the “openness” to the “as”. This must be thought in temporal rather than spatial terms. Time may be thought as the “nothing” in and for which beings may be. Without covering the Heideggerian thinking of temporality, we can at least seek to clarify that what at stake for Heidegger is the *kinesis* of temporalized potentiality⁶.

Heidegger’s thinking against the “aesthetic” (against the aesthetic reflective judgement of the subject) by developing an original ontological thinking of the artwork is not a recovery of a concept of “life” or form of life. Resolutely delimiting a substantive concept of “life” on the basis of the priority of *Existenz* entails that “aesthetics” itself is delimited as an *existentiell*, a mode of understanding that presupposes self-interpreting existence (facticity). Heidegger’s abiding question is not that of “being”, but the question of what “gives” or “dispenses” being. As being is always the being of entities, beings are disclosed in their ways of being (*Wesen*). The question of the meaning of being is the question of this disclosure. Ontology attempts to think the *kinesis* (movement) of the disclosure of beings. Hence a fundamental ontology of *Dasein* is privileged insofar as *Dasein* is that being that has its being as a question for itself. This is given on the basis of the kinetic giving or dispensation of being (temporalization). The later thinking of *Ereignis* attempts to think this dispensation itself.

To return to the distinction between “art” and “life”. This distinction is already technical. It requires the formal division of genre, the demarcation of a region of being, specialization, the spatialisation of a subject of experience. It already requires the “biopolitical” distinction—because organized around the concept of a humanism—between a humanities and a science, the domain of an informatics and a logistics of labour and capital. Neither art nor life, nor the reflection of one into the other by means of a dialectic of unity can take place without the economisation and repetition of technics.

Where art is identified with the creative and the expressive, art is as yet never without its technicity or calculation, its formal rules, the selection of

⁶ For a more precise account see Thomas Sheehan, “Heidegger’s Philosophy of Mind,” *Contemporary Philosophy: A New Survey*, ed G. Floistad, vol. IV, *Philosophy of Mind*: 237-318 (Nijhoff: The Hague, 1984).

materials, the “transformation” of force into figure. An “aesthetics of living” set over and against the “machine for living” is accordingly too late. The potentiality of decision is always a “yes” to repeatability and iteration (itself the possibility of a Kantian *sensus communis* and the form of universality). To be exceptionally reductive, though no less exact, we may trace this separation or distinction to the difference between a “good” and a “bad” repetition. The bad repetition is pure seriality, whereas the good repetition returns to itself, changes, perfects itself, affirms or creates more possibility, more difference, and so more creativity⁷. For any mode of repetition, a promise is at work. Although pure seriality is without ontological futurity, it is still promissory—though it promises nothing more than more of itself, sustaining and negating its own promissory force. The “good” repetition promises more—an as *iterability*, it promises variation, overcoming, beginning again. It structures the possibility of a promise of futurity. For both Freud and Heidegger, one’s repetition is one’s truth—that which a self must confront and work through (“becoming who you are”). This evaluative distinction between seriality and iterability, however, exhausts itself. Iterability is both already serial, yet there is no pure seriality, no infinitely faithful repetition. Temporally, there is never an identical moment of signification or interval of difference. What discursively separates the good from the bad repetition is some form of decision or responsibility, some figure of temporalizing a here and now that bears upon a future. Repetition becomes a *techne* in the form of calculation, judgement, *making something matter*, being remarkable or *significant*, worth repeating into the future as the potential for a new event—the singular example being the artwork.

Repetition itself, however, does not itself determine technology as a philosophical problem. The question to ask is: *how and why* is technology a problem, or specifically, how and why is technology a *modern* problem? It is immediately necessary to question the distinction between a modern and a traditional or an ancient technology. It remains to be seen whether an essential difference should pertain. Although there may indeed be a profound difference of degree, of scale and capacity, it is equally necessary to insist that there is nothing specifically “modern” about technicity today, or indeed, there is nothing “modern” about technics as such. Technics is not reducible to the anthropological use of a tool, nor to any particular instance of a substantive technology. The distinction between a traditional or ancient technology and modern technology would itself only be meaningful according to a certain *form* of history. Indeed,

⁷ Space prohibits the valuable exploration of Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition*.

the problem of history and historicity—the form or frame of history—itsself presupposes the problem of technicity⁸.

What defines the modernity of the modern is realization of *history as a form*. History becomes meaningful as the reflexive problem of its own form (hence the distinction between ancient and modern, the place of the “now” and the “new”, etc). At this point, we can begin to properly engage with Heidegger’s thinking of technology. In the late *Le Thor* seminar (1969), Heidegger suggests that:

Enframing is, as it were, the photographic negative of enowning (*Ereignis*) (Heidegger, 2003: 60).

And further:

In enowning, the history of being has not so much reached its end, as that it now appears *as* history of being. There is no destinal epoch of enowning. Sending is from enowning (*Das Schicken ist aus dem Ereignen*) (Heidegger, 2003: 61).

If the history of being is revealed *as* a history, history itself stands out *as a frame*. It becomes possible, then, to invoke an “end of history” as the completion of the possibilities of metaphysics (and where “art” as world-disclosure passes into commodification). In the age of modern technology, this form or frame stands out as such. Beings are indeed “present”, as framed, as standing at the ready. What stands out in the *Gestell* is the framing itself. The *Gestell*, accordingly, is the prelude or preparation for a thinking of *Ereignis*. The *Gestell* “brings into being” the very frame of meaning. Technology is a making-manifest, and at the same time, the oblivion of its own making-manifest. It allows beings to appear, but not, for Heidegger, in their being, but as *finite* resources. Technology is meaningful as “the self-revealing of the standing reserve (*Bestand*)” (Heidegger, 1977: 19).

Enframing is the “photographic negative” of *Ereignis* insofar as enframing reveals the historial (*Geschichtlichkeit*) place of the frame itself. That history has an existential structure stands out in the historical moment (modernity) where history (*Historie*) ceases to offer meaning. Every epoch

⁸ We cannot assume that ancient Greek technology did not engage the violence we associate with modern industrialization, etc. Here, Young makes the point that for Heidegger, modern technology *constrains* objects and beings to appear as nothing but resource. As will be argued presently, this depends upon the priority of *poieisis* over *techné*. See Julian Young, *Heidegger’s Later Philosophy*: 37-62 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

has a certain frame—without a form or a frame, there is no “mode of revealing” by which time and place assume meaning, or may enter into what the translation of *Ereignis* as “appropriation” or “propriation” would suggest. The modern *Gestell* does not only constrain beings to appear as resource, it stands out as the only form in which beings can be approached. Yet Heidegger insists that the *Gestell* conceals revealing itself. It does so not by being taken for granted, but by disengaging its form from the event of disclosure. Beings “stand” at the ready. Every possible mode of disclosure, in turn, is apprehended only through a reduction to *Gestell*.

In order to properly explicate Heidegger’s thinking of technology, we need to look back to certain moments of the *Beiträge*. Here, the concept of *Machenschaft*⁹ (machination) anticipates the figure of *Gestell*, though at this point, Heidegger did not think *Machenschaft* as a preparation for *Ereignis*. As power over beings, *Machenschaft* names the representative and productive mode of disclosure/concealment (or rather, abandonment, *Vergessenheit*) in the age of technology. The world as the totality of objects available to a representing subject for scientific experimentation and practical manipulation is precisely what cannot be articulated as a “world”. Machination ushers in the “epoch of the total lack of questioning of all things and of all machinations” (Heidegger, 1999: 86). *Dasein* understands itself to be productive of its own representations as a planning-calculable subject: “The planning-calculable makes a being always more re-presentable, accessible in the every possible explanatory respect, to such an extent that for their part these controllables (*Beherrschbarkeiten*) come together [...]” (Heidegger, 1999: 348). Machination is a making (*techne*) determined by an ontology of beings as makeable. This comportment “says that the self-making by itself is the interpretation of φυσικὸς that is accomplished τεχνη and its horizon of orientation, so that what counts now is the ponderance of the makeable and the self-making” (Heidegger, 1999: 88). Both naturalistic biology and technological reproduction assume the makeability of beings (one could extend this thinking to the human genome project, etc). The being as a being is the represented object “[...] in the end so dissolved into controllability that the being-character of a being disappears, as it were, and the abandonment of beings by being is completed” (Heidegger, 1999: 348). Heidegger engages the same theme in *The Question Concerning Technology*, but radicalises this at the end of the *Le Thor* seminar—here,

⁹ We should note the etymological connection between *Machenschaft* and *Macht* (power), as well as Heidegger’s reading of Nietzsche’s *Wille zur Macht* as the apotheosis of the “nihilistic will-to-will”.

technology is thought less in terms of production and “objectification” but in the “revealing” of the standing reserve wherein the *object itself disappears*—there is only the standing reserve and the already given replaceability (*Ersetzbarkeit*) of resources. Being is no longer resource, but being-replaceable (Heidegger, 2003: 62).

The phenomenology of machination comes down to the difference between calculative experience and ontological disclosure. The determination of truth as *adequatio*, the certainty of representation and the calculability of scientific method, and the restriction of being to the “experienceable”, consolidates the instrumental-anthropological-aesthetic subject. In order to explicate this difference as a problem of form, and so in turn, as the possibility of the ontological determination of the frame, we need refer to the 1955 *Der Satz vom Grund*.

Der Satz vom Grund is contemporary to the *Technology* essay published in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (itself recapitulating and extending the 1938 *The Age of the World Picture*). Here, the ontological reading of technology is more fully developed with regard to the history of being (if not, in its own way, framed). Leibniz’s formalization of judgement through which linguistic meaning assumes analytic validity entails, for Heidegger, that relations of thought and meaning are derived from material relations of technological and calculative logic. To cite two passages from *Der Satz vom Grund*:

All that is needed is a ready and willing glance into our atomic age in order to see that if God is dead, as Nietzsche says, the calculated world still remains and everywhere includes humans in its reckoning inasmuch as it reckons everything to the *principium rationis* (Heidegger, 1991: 101).

Being is experienced as ground/reason. Ground/reason is interpreted as *ratio*, as an account (*Rechenschaft*) [...]. Accordingly humans are the *animal rationale*, the creature that requires accounts and gives accounts (Heidegger, 1991: 129).

The humanism of the measuring, representing *animal rationale* is the same humanism required by the lived experience of aesthetic judgement. *Logos* is no longer a kinetic gathering, but an instrumental account. Derived from its own principle, the tautological form of the *ratio* is prevented from engaging a phenomenological-ontological analysis that would locate its own possibility in the historical emergence of technoscience. The principle of reason becomes a *principium reddendae rationis*, the technical *production of reasons* in the form of a recursive logistics of cause. *Ratio* and *Gestell* separate *physis* from *techne*: both locate the

technological “bringing forth” in terms of the *causa efficiens*, and likewise humanise art as commodity. Technological *techne* is violence against both *physis* and *poiesis*.

Perhaps here, it is necessary to interrupt the reading. We may, it is true, remain unconvinced by Heidegger’s appeal to “thinking” and “mindfulness” over and against the *ratio*. As it cannot be said, for example, that wonder has a proper object, it likewise cannot be said that scientific research and technicity is incapable of wonder, or indeed, *being wondrous itself*. Heidegger’s emphatic accusation that science predetermines its theme and analytic in advance as a calculable *Gegenstand* not only deprives science of a rapport to wonder, but fixes—frames—scientific activity; as if science is not a creative, open-ended work that accordingly requires a different phenomenological explication of its ontic practice (so as to precisely avoid its reduction at the hands of philosophy to pure objectification and the exigencies of capital). The intricate biogenetic form of the rose and the proliferation of biogenetic diversity are in no way exclusive with respect to a poetic or ontological rapport to the world. This much Heidegger does attempt to think in regard to the ontological difference, the event, and more specifically, the free relation to technology. Yet the later turn to the inception of being and the other beginning begin to appear regressive with respect to the potential of technological knowledge and experience and what may be opened for relations to time and space (a theme that could be pursued is Benjamin’s “new technological *physis*” invoked at the end of *One Way Street*). It is beyond the present scope to address what shape this may take—suffice to say, however, that it is the present incalculability of techno-scientific invention that imposes a limit on the restriction of science to the modern *Gestell*, and that in turn, situates our present responsibility and decision in rapport to the technological promise of other, possible futures.

This indeed strikes at the heart of ontology—just which possibilities are to be *counted* in the factual and historical time of *Dasein*? Just what potential for being is indeed defined as a potential and within what form or frame? Given that “possibility” always remains incomplete with respect to finitude, it is not the task of ontology to provide a normative calculus of “possible possibilisations” or “essential” decisions—what a being “ought” to be according to a updated Aristotelean *telos*. But it would appear to do precisely that. Yet decision, in Heidegger, is not for this or that *existentiell* concern, but for the *existential* of decision itself. To look back to *Being and Time*, *Dasein*’s finite or temporal transcendence presupposes a “horizontal unity” of possible significance *defined* by what *Dasein* already is and the world in which *Dasein* finds itself. The temporal *extasis* of the

future as not-yet and the past as having-been is delimited by finitude. Anticipatory resoluteness in the face of finitude actualize *Dasein*'s determinate possibilities for being. Yet the futurity of technology promises the outstripping of the form of history itself, and accordingly, exceeds the disclosive horizon of world. Technology may well present us with a "real" of which we cannot make sense in the terms and language of contemporary philosophy and/or current scientific thought. This is perhaps the exceptional question with which to begin any thinking of technics today. The truly urgent question is the shift from an ontology of memory to one of futurity, where, to use Heidegger's language, the existential of the not-yet is disengaged from the schema of the *extasis*—such that the future is perhaps more exceptionally ecstatic. What must be thought are modes of technical potentiality that outstrip the ontological bias of the "always already" and the architectonic of the *Geschichtlichkeit*.

The question concerning technics comes down, for Heidegger, to decision. Can another thinking emerge alongside or think otherwise than calculative enframing?: "Answering this question decides what will become of the earth and of human existence (*das Dasein des Menschen*) on this earth" (Heidegger, 1991, *ibid.*). The place or event of this decision, for Heidegger, cannot be ontologically posited in terms of technicity. It is a "decision" that is without logistic "validity" because it is not reducible to a casuality or normativity (the decision of a subject who wills in regard to a "value for life") that would sustain the humanization of technology. To cite *Die Frage nach der Technik*:

Because the essence of technology is nothing technological, essential reflection upon technology and decisive confrontation with it must happen in a realm that is on the one hand akin to technology and the other fundamentally different from it (Heidegger, 1977: 35).

That realm is art, language and poetry. It is necessary to think within and otherwise than the *Sprachmaschine*¹⁰. The degree or intensity of fundamental difference, however, remains precisely in question. Heidegger's thinking is not to be read as a variation of cultural pessimism or anti-modernism, or worse, a neo-apocalyptic *ressentiment*. Rather—and

¹⁰ In the 1962 essay *Überlieferte Sprache und Technische Sprache*, Heidegger admonishes the "violence" against language in the form of linguistics, functionalism, and analytic symbolism. Language becomes "information" spoken by the *Sprachmaschine* (language-machine). Martin Heidegger, "Traditional Language and Technological Language," trans. Wanda Torres Gregory, *Journal of Philosophical Research*, 23 (1998).

this is precisely why Heidegger's thinking asserts itself so forcefully today—the philosophical task is called upon, or is freed to think, what it is that gives—propriates—the *possibility* itself of the technical present. For Heidegger, the “planetary dominance” of the *Gestell* is required so as to throw into relief the completion of metaphysics. Whereas modern technology cannot think its own *techne* and so does not think of itself as an “event”, thinking itself is freed to think what makes epochality itself possible—that is, the priority of *Ereignis* to any figure of *ratio*, frame, or horizon. Yet to locate “epocality” or the signs of history as a technics, and so prior still to *Ereignis*, is to depart from Heidegger toward a more contemporary deconstructive thinking of technics (Derrida, Steigler).

The possibility of a “free relationship” to technology pivots on the “becoming good” of technological repetition. The relationship to technology, Heidegger writes at the beginning of *The Question Concerning Technology*, “will be free if it opens our human existence to the essence of technology” (Heidegger, 1977: 3). Responsibility lies in our response to the *Gestell*. At stake is thinking otherwise than calculability. The profound danger of technology is nothing less than absolute oblivion: “The threat to man does not come in the first instance from the potentially lethal machines and apparatus of technology [...]. The rule of enframing threatens man with the possibility that it could be denied to him to enter into a more original revealing and hence to experience the call of a more primal truth” (Heidegger, 1977: 28). What may be lost, Heidegger argues, is the very sense of our own temporality and possibilities for being. As a standing reserve, the world is a permanent and perpetual present, the emptiness or nihilism of an *ad infinitum*.

It is only at the end of *The Question Concerning Technology* that Heidegger calls upon art to engage a decisive confrontation with the technological *Gestell*. The saving-power that lies within technology is located on the basis of a recovered sense of the Greek *techne*: art was not derived from artistry, art works were not enjoyed aesthetically, and art was not a sector of “cultural” activity. What then, Heidegger asks, was art:

perhaps only for that brief but magnificent time? Why did art bear the modest name *techne*? Because it was a revealing that brought forth and hither, and therefore belonged within *poiesis*. It was finally that revealing which holds complete sway in all the fine arts, in poetry, and in everything poetical that obtained *poiesis* as its proper name (Heidegger, 1977: 34).

For Heidegger, enframing blocks *poiesis*. Yet Heidegger's “saving” of *techne* itself presents significant problems. If the *aition* cannot be thought according to a modern sense of causality, but rather, as form of

“gathering” or occasioning, a bringing-forth (*Her-vor-bringen*), a hermeneutic-ontological frame must come into play in order to historically delimit both a Greek and a modern meaning. Because Heidegger determines the event—and the event of language—as originary, *techne* must be determined as originating in a pre-formative *poesis*. The ontological-hermeneutic of the history of being would hinge upon the priority—not the co-originary or complementary status—of *poesis* over *techne*: what is formed is *later* than what is formative: hence, even the ontic/ontological difference as a methodological distinction is already a form or a technics, and so subsequently cedes priority to *Ereignis*.

Here, it is necessary to read Aristotle against Heidegger. Aristotle distinguishes between things made (*poiëton*) and things done (*praktōn*). The difference lies in that *poiesis* aims at an end distinct from the action (*energeia*), while *praxis* is the application of the action. *Poiesis* is not epistemic because it brings into existence what was not already present¹¹. For Aristotle, *techne* is the inventive art or skill that allows for production and manufacturing: it is the knowledge (*logos*) of how to proceed, how to actualize a form. Indeed, Heidegger follows Aristotle insofar as *techne* is not reducible to practical application. That is, *techne* is a potentiality. It follows that for Aristotle, however, *techne is the art of poiesis*—that is, the art or skill of doing—and not, as Heidegger would have it, that *poiesis* is originary with respect to *techne*, that *techne* belongs *within poiesis*. For Aristotle, *techne* is not purely practical—*techne* must already be a thinking of the *ergon*, it is a doing that has its end in view, the function or the setting-into-work of a *dynamis*. Here we locate the exigency, on Heidegger’s behalf, to delimit the “essence” of technology as being nothing technological, and so in turn, to locate in art as *poiesis*, making rather than doing, the possibility of the original possibilization of the kinetic and disclosive meaning of being without this origin *being in any way a repetition or a technics*. If repetition lies at the origin of the possibility of *Ereignis*, then an originary technics must be admitted and the ontological project is no longer assured of its priority. This entails the consequence that in the very thinking of origin, we must find calculation and repetition. To cite from *The Origin of the Work of Art*:

The setting-into-work of truth thrusts up the extra-ordinary (*Ungeheure*) while thrusting down the ordinary, and what one takes to be sure. The truth

¹¹ “[...] the object of scientific knowledge is necessary. Therefore it is eternal, because everything that is necessary, without qualification, is eternal, and what is eternal does not come into being or cease to be.” Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*: 1139b.

that opens itself in the work can never be verified or derived from what went before. In its exclusive reality, what went before is refuted by the work. What art founds, therefore, can never be compensated and made good in terms of what is present and available for use. The founding is an overflowing, a bestowal (Heidegger, 2002: 47).

At stake is the possibility of non-calculative decision “bestowed” by the ontological freedom of “the open”. But—if *techne* precedes *poiesis*, the possibility of thinking an originary technics prior to ontology begins to properly take shape. The consequence is that Heidegger’s *thinking of technics is and must also be an enframing*, or perhaps more exactly, also a setting-into-work, but in a manner no longer faithful to Heidegger.

For Heidegger, the work of art *presents its own possibility*. The work of art would be nothing technical. It is not a mimesis, nor a produced thing. The origin of art, and the origin of the *work* of art, must be distinguished. The given historical origin of art tells us nothing of art *as* art—it is the “as” accordingly, that must be thought. It is the “as” that is formative (in a manner more originary than the distinction between form and content). The work of art as a “setting-into-work” is the work that forms itself as work. The *work* of art is thought from out of *Ereignis*. Heidegger again:

A work, by being a work, allows a space for that spaciousness. “To allow a space” here means, in particular: to make free the free of the open and to install this free place in its structure [...]. As a work, the work holds open the open of a world (Heidegger, 2002: 23).

Heidegger clarifies his thinking at the very end of the *Artwork* essay. He will not, at any point, mention Aristotle by name. He will, instead, convict the translation of Greek into Latin: the *forma* of beauty that takes its light from Being takes from a Being already thought as *eidōs*. Form, or *morphe*, is already predicated of the *organon* (work). In turn, actuality becomes *veritas*, objectivity, lived experience and representation. And finally, aesthetics.

But art and the work of art are not the formless. Art is not chaos. The work of art is gathered into the ontological fold as presenting the very difference or strife between being and beings, between world and earth. In an extraordinary passage, Heidegger writes:

This strife which is brought into the rift-design, and so set back into the earth and fixed in place, is the figure (*Gestalt*). The createdness of the work means: the fixing in place of truth in the figure. Figure is the structure of the rift in its self-establishment. The structured rift is the jointure (*Fuge*) of the shining of truth. What we here call “figure” is

always to be thought out of that particular placing (*stellen*) and placement (*Ge-stell*) as which the work comes to presence when it sets itself forth (Heidegger, 2002: 38).

The *Riss* brings world and earth, being and beings, into a shared outline (*Umriss*). This shared outline cannot be thought any other way than as the *form* of a relation, the structure or fundamental design (*Grundriss*) of the ontological difference.

The truth of the difference, or the thinking of the being *as* a being, the disclosure of the being in its ontological-eidetic meaning as the factual implication of a historical world, is a placement or a framing of the very method and logic of Heidegger's ontology. At issue then is the *technics of originary thinking*, its design or figuration of an "event" that makes possible ontology itself. The very placement and framing of the *Riss* as ontological difference is the framing (the placement and the form) of the thinking of the origin itself, and in turn, *Ereignis*. Both the ontological difference and the event may be read as a technics that sets-into-work a kinetic *poiesis* as an ontologised *techne*.

Originary Technics?

A technics addressed as a setting-into-work of truth is a technics thought ontologically and ethically. By thinking facticity as *ethos*, technology is always already within a horizon of responsibility. What is unique about modern technology, however, is that as a figure of futurity, technology exceeds and so positions our horizon of responsibility. For this reason, technology is the very "thing" that responsibility must bear upon.

Turning now to Stiegler's *Technics and Time* (it is not, to say the least, possible to rehearse the scope, significance and innovation of this work. It is necessary to leave aside much of the demands of exposition and pass over the "fault of Epimetheus" and the reading of Leroi-Gourhan), we can critically focus on the essential claim of Stiegler's argument. Indeed, Stiegler's account is haunted by the very anthropology it would otherwise deconstructively delimit. Despite the brilliance of Stiegler's reading of Heidegger, Stiegler pushes the ontic/ontological difference and the later thought of *Ereignis* back into a metaphysical anthropologism so as to convict Heidegger of the exclusion of technics. Stiegler's claim is that Heidegger fails to think the question of technics adequately in that he forecloses the role of technical supplementarity for *Dasein*'s finite temporalisation. In particular, *Dasein*'s individuated and disclosive temporal being-there requires the supplement of a mnemotechnics, a

requirement not fully thought out in Heidegger's account of equipment, etc. What is needed, however, is a thinking of technics in terms of *kinesis* and potentiality. If a critical reading of Heidegger misses *kinesis*, then the question concerning technology—and how it may be rethought according to a more radical thinking of *kinesis*—is compromised.

The apparent overdetermined technologization of the world today may be traced to an originary technics given in the possibility of the differentiations of matter. Stiegler argues that such a differentiation may be thought according to a historicization of Derrida's thinking of archi-writing and *différance*. Technics itself is the invention of the human—the event of “epiphylogensis” sets off a technologically differentiated evolutionary process (technics as the pursuit of life by means other than life). Technics is the possibility of time and memory: neither can we posit the transcendence of consciousness nor a purely biogenetic origin of humanity. What must be thought, Stiegler, insists, a truly aporetic origin: the exteriorisation of the tool forms its own interior border, the co-possibility of the “who” and the “what” as a stage of *différance* in the history of life. The emergence of the tool-using human is a new kind of “program” or code of *différance*:

Différance is the history of life in general, in which an articulation is produced, a stage of *différance* out of which emerges the possibility of making the gramme as such, that is, “consciousness”, appear [...]. The passage from the genetic to the nongenetic is the appearance of a new type of gramme and/or program. If the issue is no longer that of a founding *anthropos* in the pure origin of itself, the origin of its type must be found (Stiegler, 1998: 137-138).

Constituting the passage from the genetic to the nongenetic as a stage of *différance*—yet where *différance* is at the same time the very history of life—remains problematic. Not only can we not attribute the arrival of finitude to the emergence of substantive forms of technology, we cannot separate biogenetic evolution from “epiphylogenesis” (the memory of the tool). If genetics is effectively a code and so a relation of the living to the non-living, genetics is originarily a certain “technical” reproducibility. What makes technics possible is not the exteriorization of memory, but *iteration*. There is no technics and no epiphylogenesis without repetition. Stiegler preserves anthropomorphism by presenting the human—*Dasein*—as a rupture in the history of life. The specific difference of the human may be located within the *différance* of life, but iteration and supplemenatrity are not themselves dependant upon any given mnemo-technical form. Epiphylogensis (whose scientific and philosophical status

is dubious at best), represents less a differentiation of the evolutionary process, but rather, another instance of inscribing the “autonomy” and domination of technology over biological life and humanity. Or to rephrase this, a technicity prior to “organised inorganic” beings—which means the substantiative form of life of the tool-using being—must be thought. If “organised inorganic” beings emerge on the basis of a technical supplement whose forms preserve a mnemotechnics, and so, a calculation that is constitutive of temporality and spatiality, this is a technics that remains thought on the basis of substantive technical forms. The technics of organised inorganic beings may pursue life by means other than life, but it cannot be said that technics itself, or any form of iteration, necessarily pursues any given end.

At any rate, if we regard *différance* and supplementarity as constituting the possibility of a *metaphoricity* of a technics, an empirical account of technics and its relation to genetics is not required to perform the philosophical deconstruction of origin (the origin of the *anthropos*, time, and language). An “originary technics” is a quasi-transcendental “concept”, and so cannot perform the work of empirical or positivistic insight. We can more effectively engage a genealogy of technics by disengaging from the problematic of whether or not *Dasein* becomes possible on the basis of technical supplementation, and in this manner, reflect back upon the Heideggerian question concerning technology itself. Indeed, an originary technics attempts to account for the origin of genealogy—and conceptuality—themselves. Stiegler’s problems emerge fundamentally from restricting technics—the *gramme*, writing-in-general, *iterability*—to technology: tools, digital archives, recording processes, and so on. Technics or originary technics is reduced to and essentially understood as an *anthropological* prothesis. Biogenesis is preserved prior to technics.

Where Heidegger claims that the *Wesen* of technics is nothing technological, we may indeed say that Heidegger is both right and wrong. Technics cannot be reduced to technology. Heidegger’s thinking of technics is both non-technological—it concerns the meaning structure of the *Gestell*—but must also be a technics; both *Ereignis* and the *Gestell* are figures of the architecture of the *Riss* (ontological difference). Heidegger preserves the form of the difference so as to ensure the priority of *poieisis* over *techne*. For Stiegler, Heidegger’s exclusion of technics may be genealogically traced to the problem of knowledge posed by Plato in the *Meno*. As we may recall, the aporia of memory is solved by the *a priori* form of anamnesis, recollection of the universal. The empirical-transcendental divide, and accordingly, Western metaphysics, would begin

at this point. The thrownness of *Dasein*'s "always already" may bare a family resemblance, but we must remember that Heidegger's ontology is based upon Aristotelian *kinesis*. The "already" is not present in the form of a memory, but effective as temporalized potentiality. Platonic anamnesis is already constituted by a metaphysics attributable to the early Greek inability to think nullity and facticity—the non-presence of the open as the space where beings come to be (early Greek thinking, like technical thinking today, does indeed think being-as-presence, the difference lying in the mode of "emergence"). Neither modes of thinking think kinetic absence—*Ereignis*). Indeed, the aporia solved by memory in the *Meno* is attributable to the *kinesis* of the being of beings. Both Heidegger's ontology of technology and Stiegler's deconstruction can be delimited by a thinking of originary repetition as technics. To phrase this more specifically, a temporal kinesis of iteration always may *or may not* constitute a mnemotechnics. The only "necessary" condition of iteration is its repeatability and variation. Iteration and *différance* do not provide a *telos* that constrains potentiality to the realization of any given ontic form. This has the consequence that a phenomenology derived from the reflexivity of a being is required to normatively select and calculate on the ends of that being. Technicity itself, however, does not provide *kinesis* with an end.

There is only a technics if technics and technology are first of all given in the mode of potentiality: that is, they are not fully present as an ousiological determination, but are temporal (a becoming). In terms of *kinesis*, substantial beings are always already their futural possibility, given by a movement of temporalized potentiality. The necessity of accounting for time on the basis of technics remains irreducible. A contemporary ontology faces the challenge of thinking time as a technicity, in the terms of the becoming space of time and the becoming time of space in regard to the non-original iterability of *différance*. This is indeed Stiegler's project. But a rethought "technics" must itself go further: we may indeed and necessarily locate futurity as the intentional feature of *Dasein* or the subject, but we cannot do the same for technics itself. We cannot, as such, contain technics within the horizon of memory, the *anthropos*, nor less a politics.

Nonetheless, the Heideggerian thinking of the free relation to technics does indeed assume a significant political and ethical *telos*. The *Gestell* indeed affords this possibility, and it is in this possibility that Stiegler's own thinking can be situated. The genealogy of technical matter demands "un poplitéus de la mémoire", that is, a remembering or recovering of the default of origin in which politics becomes the struggle to remember the

history of the human and the technical as the possibility of the invention of the new while simultaneously displacing the anthropomorphism of the modern political citizen-subject and overcoming the philosophical repression of technics (Heidegger included). But this reinscribes history not as the history of difference (iteration, etc), but as constrained by the critique of modernity and the spectre of the technologised loss of memory. To borrow the phrase, the thorough-going “technologization of the life-world” assumes the thesis of a quasi-technological determinism. Technology becomes autonomous, divorced from social agency, a source of alienation that must be overcome. The “redoublement épochal”, the active remembering of the default of origin, cannot be guaranteed, however, by a revitalised or rethought technics. Technics itself does not guarantee the intentional structure of a politics (the *telos* of a *polis*) nor less temporality itself. Technics offers no *end*. Hence, a politics must also be technical and construct a *telos*. Politics must affirm its technicity, without as yet reducing itself to the category of means.

Indeed, if what is at issue is a politics that bears upon political communities “to-come”, it is the memory of the future that is at stake—the technological possibilities for the invention of new communities. Yet Stiegler’s politics of memory is constrained to reinscribe the critique of technology as the enabling frame of a new politics. To cite Stiegler from the preface to *Technics and Time*:

The reactions, immediate or mediate and mediatized, “epidermic” or calculated, that are provoked by the extraordinary changes characteristic of our age, in which technics constitutes the most powerful dynamic factor, must be imperatively overcome. The present time is caught up in a whirlwind in which decision making (*krisis*) has become increasingly numb, the mechanisms and tendencies of which remain obscure, and which must be made intelligible at the cost of considerable effort of anamnesis as much as of meticulous attention to the complexity of what is taking place [...].

The frenzy of time is all the more paradoxical in that, although it should open onto the evidence of a future, never before has the imminence of an impossibility to come been more acute (Stiegler, 1998: ix).

The tropes of the critique of modernity articulate themselves with clockwork regularity: memory and futurity, made possible by technics, are as yet at risk. Certainly, a thinking of the technicity of time and memory prevents us from opposing a non-technical concept. Technics must already contend with kinesis, with finitude and repetition. The incalculable, finally, cannot be opposed to the calculable as an alterity: this is indeed to agree with Stiegler. But the overdetermination of the possible radical loss

of the future is the direct consequence of improperly technologizing technics on the basis of a forced concept of epiphylogenesis that in fact preserves an originary biological unicity. As Beardsworth contends, “the human lives through means other than life (technical objects and prostheses), naming an originary “default of origin” supplemented by the history of technics [...] end up having the following somewhat ironic consequence: biological life prior to, or in its difference from anthropogenesis is removed from the structure of an originary technicity; as a result biology is naturalised and the differentiation of technicity *qua* technics is considered in its exteriorised form in relation to the process of hominization” (Beardsworth, 2003: 49-50). A politics of technics necessarily bears upon a humanist horizon. But if technics itself cannot be thought within the *ergon* of hominization—the end for which a politics of memory is predicated—then what is present is not the impossibility of politics, but its radical potential to assume hitherto unimaginable forms. If the technical promise of hominization should engage a radical transformation of the human being, then a politics of memory is but one possible (and not at all necessary) finite phase in the history of matter. This would indeed profoundly engage technics with the Derridean and Lévinasian theme of alterity (and here, contra Beardsworth’s caution) beyond community, but perhaps even beyond the form or outline of the “to-come”.

Technics does not present us with impossibility, but with modes of potentiality. The event of technics is the form and force of potentiality as a kinetic system of difference that temporalises and spatialises, but without intentional sense. Technics must first be thought from its “event”, from its taking place as finite repetition.

Reading technology, art, life, the body, and so on, in terms of a generalised technics must also admit its historical threshold. In agreement with Stiegler, the emergence of modern industrial and digital technology, the *ratio*, structural linguistics and semiotics (or rather, grammatology) is what, *historically*, makes such a thinking of technics possible. Without contemporary technology and its horizon of sense, it would not be possible to inscribe technics as a condition of possibility. This is not, however, to assert the thorough-going technologization of “life” itself: such would amount to a vulgar reduction. On the contrary, what is opened for a contemporary thinking of technology is the potentiality of technics. Outstripping the form of history necessarily turns the critical thinking of modern technology to what gives form and history as such. Admitting the technicity of humanity both accounts for and exceeds epocality. Admitting the *techne* of the event entails thinking technics not as domination, but as

the ontological or pre-ontological possibility of calculation as it necessarily engages the incalculable.

If there is a horizon of responsibility within which the promise of technology is meaningful, what as yet defines technology as a problem is its capacity to *outstrip our capacity to properly frame technology*. Indeed, our ethical sensibility is barely able to keep pace with techno-science (for example, the resort to legal bans due to anxieties over embryonic stem-cell research and genetic manipulation). Technological innovation expresses the potential for profound and presently incalculable transformations of human existence.

Opposing “art” to technology diminishes both. It is necessary that technology have the freedom to be inventive. And this is Heidegger’s point. As an art, *techne* is a kinetic disclosure of the factual world. But we can turn this around. Art is a technics, a specifically creative event of potentiality. If we can think technology as a setting-into-work of decision and responsibility, then the *ethos* of technology is found *in its potentiality to make possible the place of facticity*, as what gives the time and place of our care and possibility. The ontology of technics is—that which gives time. Technics gives time to time. It allows there to be more time. Yet technics itself cares nothing for time. Time is what we engage as the *techne* of our temporal being-there: time, then, as politics. But again, technics itself offers no end or proper purpose for humanity. Technics itself is iterable code or form—genetics, *différance*, repeatability as such. In this sense, both a politics of technology and or as the free relation to technology are the reflex of human finitude: the necessary engagement of rendering existence meaningful in a time and place with the general economy of technics. This has neither an essentially anthropological or ontological form: the general economy of technics is not reducible to history or horizontality. Its potentiality, we must necessarily interpret as a condition of responsibility, already structures the incalculable forms of possible human evolution. This we must interpret as the present condition of responsibility toward technology. It exceeds, however, the horizon of politics. Technics becomes a political question on the basis of conserving a certain “form of life”—the anthropological *Dasein*. A truly radical thought of technics can look beyond this.

The task of thought today is to think how technics may indeed outstrip its own factual possibility. This situates any possible ethics of technology. A philosophy of technology must begin to think precisely its futurity, as a “yes” to technics traced in the very technics of language in which we engage technics itself. Technology is our art, our architectonic, that which gives us the time and space to begin, and to begin again.

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THE *AN-DENKEN* OF EXISTENTIALISM: VATTIMO'S HEIDEGGER AND THE AESTHETICS OF LIVING

ASHLEY WOODWARD

At the end of a chapter on the contemporary Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo in his book *Prefaces to the Diaphora*, Peter Carravetta suggests that Vattimo's philosophy of "weak thought" (*il pensiero debole*) offers us "freedom to reopen the dossier of existentialism" (Carravetta, 1991: 235). Carravetta does not expand on this suggestion, and it is one which may strike the reader familiar with Vattimo's works as unlikely, since in a number of places he has explicitly indicated the obsolescence of existentialism in contemporary life and thought. For example, in the essay "The Decline of the Subject and the Problem of Testimony", he writes with approval that:

[t]oday's philosophical climate shows little interest in [the existentialist] subject and is in general unreceptive to the themes of "classic" existentialism, such as the individual, freedom to choose, responsibility, death, and *Angst* [...] (Vattimo, 1993: 40-41).

Despite the seemingly unlikely nature of Carravetta's suggestion, however, I wish to take the theme of this book, which places the notion of an "aesthetics of living" in relation to the thought of Martin Heidegger, as an opportunity to explore it. I shall do so by developing the contention that some of the implications of Heidegger's thought for an "aesthetics of living" have already been explored in fruitful ways by Jean-Paul Sartre, in the classic, existentialist phase of his thinking.

Sartre's existentialist thought has widely been considered obsolescent since the rise of structuralism, and is still frequently regarded as such today. Moreover, the reception of the later Heidegger's works – including his explicit rejection of Sartrean existentialism in the "Letter on humanism" (Heidegger, 1993) – has been instrumental in deposing the Parisian philosopher of the cafés from the influential position he once

held. More recently, however, scholars such as Christina Howells, Tilottama Rajan, and Nik Farrell Fox have attempted to reassess Sartre's status in twentieth century philosophy, and in particular to reconsider his relationship to deconstructionist, post-structuralist, or postmodern philosophers such as Derrida and Foucault (Howells, 1988; Rajan, 2002; Fox, 2003). Taking up this project of reassessment, I wish to argue that Vattimo's philosophy of weak thought might contribute in a significant way to a reconsideration of Sartre. While many of the reassessments of Sartrean existentialism are conducted as a history of ideas, which seek to revise Sartre's place in the genealogy of twentieth century French theory, Vattimo's weak thought – and in particular, its appropriation and development of the Heideggerian concept of *An-Denken* – furnishes us with an appropriate interpretive thread along which to reconsider Sartre's thought for its significance in the *current* situation. This interpretive thread, I will argue, allows us to see a Heideggerian impulse at work in Sartre's existentialist "aesthetics of living", and indicates its relevance for contemporary life and thought. In the first section of this paper, I will briefly reiterate the Heideggerian orthodoxy concerning Sartre, that he is a metaphysician who remains in the oblivion of Being. In the second section, I shall outline some of the key points of Vattimo's reading of Heidegger, before, in the final section, applying the interpretive thread leading from this reading to a reconsideration – a rethinking, recollection, or *An-Denken* – of Sartrean existentialism for an aesthetics of living. The interpretive strategy I shall follow here thus shows both how a certain reading of Heidegger allows us to reconsider Sartre's thought, and how this reconsideration allows us to read Sartre as a Heideggerian thinker (at least in a restricted sense) who theorises an aesthetics of living.

The Heideggerian Orthodoxy: *Sartre as metaphysician*

As is of course well-known, in *Being and Nothingness* (Sartre, 1956) and other existentialist writings, Sartre appropriates various aspects of Heidegger's early thought. Of particular note, he uses the French translation of *Dasein* – *réalité humaine* (human reality) – in his existential interpretation of human existence, and applies the temporal, projectual characteristics of *Dasein* to consciousness. As is also well-known, Heidegger distances himself from Sartrean existentialism in the "Letter on humanism", where he claims that Sartre's thought has nothing to do with his own. This position on the relationship between Sartre and Heidegger was subsequently adopted by a new generation of French Heidegger scholars, and became reified as a founding gesture of what Tom Rockmore

calls the French Heideggerian orthodoxy¹. The establishment of this relationship has meant that the rise in popularity of Heidegger and more recent French Heideggerianisms, such as Jacques Derrida's deconstruction, has been synonymous with the obsolescence of Sartrean existentialism. Heidegger's "Letter of humanism" is the text which lies at the heart of this Heideggerian dismissal of Sartre, and which appears to give it philosophical foundation. As such, it constitutes the challenge which any contemporary rethinking of Sartre in the orbit of Heidegger's thought must face.

For Heidegger, of course, the fundamental philosophical problem is how to think Being; he considers the history of Western philosophy to consist in a progressive obfuscation of Being through a form of thought he names metaphysics. Metaphysics makes the mistake of answering the question of Being with theories about particular beings (existents or entities), and thus obscures the question itself. According to Heidegger, the obscuring or forgetting of the question of Being is the primary source of the ills of the contemporary world, both intellectual and cultural. While Heidegger's arguments in the "Letter on humanism" are complex, the kernel of his criticism of Sartre in this text is a characterisation of the French philosopher as another metaphysical thinker who fails to think Being. This criticism is given most succinctly in his analysis of the slogan of existentialism, "existence precedes essence" (*existentia* precedes *essentia*). This slogan is a reversal of the metaphysical doctrine, introduced by Plato and influential throughout the Western philosophical tradition, that essence precedes existence. Heidegger argues that despite the apparent radicality of this reversal, Sartre fails to overcome what is

¹ According to Rockmore this orthodoxy instituted by Jean Beaufret, is exemplified by philosophers such as Jacques Derrida and Michel Haar, and was exported to the Anglophone academy largely through the dissemination of deconstruction. Rockmore characterises this French "orthodox" approach to Heidegger scholarship with three points: the tendency to interpret his earlier writings from the perspective of his later work, to see Heidegger's thought as beyond philosophy, and to minimise the significance of his involvement with Nazism (Rockmore, 1995: 121). Rockmore contends that, like any orthodoxy, the French Heideggerian orthodoxy is based on an uncritical fidelity to presupposed truth claims which are rarely, if ever, tested (Rockmore, 1995: 124). In my invocation of a Heideggerian orthodoxy here, I follow Rockmore only to the extent that the genealogy of Heidegger interpretation he proposes explains the widespread uncritical acceptance of Heidegger's characterisation of Sartre in the "Letter on humanism". Indeed, the view that Sartre was wholly mistaken in his reading of Heidegger is one part of the orthodoxy which Rockmore himself seems to uncritically accept.

decisive about metaphysics – its forgetting of the ontological difference and obscuring of Being – because he does not enquire into the origin of the categories of essence and existence. For Heidegger, Being must be questioned at a more fundamental level and understood as that which discloses such categories. Heidegger thus argues that with the slogan of existentialism, “existence precedes essence”, Sartre “stays with metaphysics in oblivion of the truth of Being” (Heidegger, 1993: 232).

Reflecting on Sartre's popular lecture “Existentialism is a humanism” (Sartre, 1975), Heidegger further criticises Sartre's existentialism by way of a criticism of humanism in general. This criticism attacks humanism as a metaphysical way of thinking what it means to be human; a way of thinking which decides the answer to this question in advance of essential or ontological considerations. For Heidegger, to think human beings in an essential or ontological manner is to understand them as *Dasein*, as the particular beings to whom Being reveals itself. Because humanism in all its traditional forms ignores Being and the human being's relation to it, Heidegger considers it a metaphysical form of thought which thinks only about beings or entities, devaluing human beings themselves and forgetting what is of primary significance in their existence, *viz.* the capacity to reveal Being. Heidegger writes:

Every humanism is either grounded in a metaphysics or is itself made to be the ground of one. Every determination of the essence of man that already presupposes an interpretation of beings without asking about the truth of Being, whether knowingly or not, is metaphysical... Accordingly, every humanism remains metaphysical' (Heidegger, 1993: 225-6).

More specifically, Heidegger challenges Sartre's statement, “we are precisely in a situation where there are only human beings”², asserting that we should instead say that “we are precisely in a situation where principally there is Being” (Heidegger, 1993: 237). The difference between Sartre and Heidegger on this point can be understood in terms of their respective understandings of phenomenology and the origin of meaning in the world: for Sartre, the world is meaningless in itself, and is only imbued with meaning through the meaning-conferring activities of conscious human beings. For Heidegger, although human beings (as *Dasein*) have an essential role to play in the revelation of meaning, Being takes priority since Being is that by which, or from which, meaning is given. Furthermore, from Heidegger's perspective, Sartre's central focus on consciousness reproduces the *subjectivism* of modern metaphysics. In

² Quoted by Heidegger in Heidegger, 1993: 237.

supposing that meaning issues entirely from consciousness, Sartre's theory of meaning remains blind to the way Being gives meaning and the way things show themselves from themselves. Beyond the metaphysical character of the slogan of existentialism, Sartre thus appears to Heidegger to be a metaphysician oblivious to Being because of the humanistic and subjectivising nature of his thought. In sum then, for Heidegger and the orthodox Heideggerians, Sartre remains one more metaphysical philosopher in a long line of philosophers who fail to think Being in its essence, and who thus contribute to the contemporary cultural and philosophical malaise coextensive with the decline of Being.

An-Denken: Vattimo's reading of Heidegger

Since the dismissal of Sartre's thought by Heidegger has been maintained under the influence of the French Heideggerian orthodoxy, it will perhaps not be surprising that I turn to an interpreter of Heidegger who is neither French nor orthodox in order to question and displace this dismissal. Gianni Vattimo's philosophy lies at the heart of the trend in Italian philosophy known as "weak thought". This trend, which has been characterised as an Italian counterpart to French deconstruction, develops a more modest conception of reason based on interpretation rather than deduction. Weak thought draws inspiration from Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Gadamer, and, most significantly, Heidegger. As Daniel Barbiero notes, "before there was weak thought, there was Vattimo's relationship to the work of Heidegger, which has provided weak thought with its most basic conceptions of time and history" (Barbiero, 1992: 159). It is Vattimo's reading of Heidegger which furnishes weak thought with a theory of interpretation, which, I will contend, allows us to see the contemporary relevance of the links between Sartre's and Heidegger's thought, and which enables a reconsideration of Sartre's thought for an aesthetics of living.

The crux of Vattimo's reading of Heidegger is a concern to show that he may be read as an anti-foundational thinker – that is, a thinker who ceases to think Being as "ground" or "foundation". This reading is explicitly an unorthodox one³, since it depends on reading Heidegger against many of his own self-interpretations. Vattimo characterises his

³ Unorthodox, but not unique. In fact, when Vattimo's book *The End of Modernity* (Vattimo, 1988) was translated into German, some commentators complained that his reading of Heidegger was not original (Barbiero, 1992: 165).

own method of interpreting Heidegger as a “distortion”⁴ of Heidegger’s thought, but one which betrays the letter of Heidegger’s texts in order to be true to the spirit of his thought. More specifically, Vattimo develops a selective interpretation which emphasises certain moments of Heidegger’s thought and turns them against other moments. Vattimo contends that just as a distinction was made between right and left Hegelianism, such a distinction might be made in the contemporary scene of Heidegger scholarship, and this distinction might serve to situate his own reading:

[r]ight, in the case of Heidegger, denotes an interpretation of his overcoming of metaphysics as an effort, in spite of everything, somehow to prepare a “return of Being” perhaps in the form of an apophatic, negative, mystical ontology; left denotes the reading that I propose of the history of Being as the story of a “long goodbye”, of an interminable weakening of Being. In this case, the overcoming of Being is understood only as a recollection of the oblivion of Being, never as making Being present again, not even as a term that always lies beyond every formulation (Vattimo, 1997: 13).

Vattimo’s “left Heideggerianism” asserts that Heidegger’s thinking cannot consistently be thematised as aiming towards a “return” or a “remembering” of Being which would overcome metaphysical thinking and institute a new foundation for thought. Vattimo argues that to think the return of Being in a new foundation is to think it as something absent which might be made present. However, thinking Being as presence is identified by Heidegger as one of the primary marks of metaphysical thought. Vattimo writes, “[t]he forgetting of Being that is characteristic of metaphysics [...] cannot be understood in contrast to a “remembering of Being” which would grasp it as present” (Vattimo, 1993: 114)⁵.

As Heidegger notes in certain passages (Vattimo most frequently cites the opening of *On Time and Being* (Heidegger, 1972) and the closing of “On the essence of ground” (Heidegger, 1998b), it is a mistake of metaphysics to think Being as ground or foundation – in the sense of stable structure or enduring presence. For Vattimo, this foundational interpretation of Being is in fact the dominant meaning of “metaphysics” to emerge from Heidegger’s thought. Rather, Vattimo argues, Heidegger’s

⁴ See the explanation of Heidegger’s term *Verwindung* below.

⁵ On this point, we might recall Heidegger’s complaint, in “On the question of Being”, that “[p]eople have tended to represent the ‘oblivion of being’ as though to say it by way of an image, being were the umbrella that has been left sitting somewhere through the forgetfulness of some philosophy professor” (Heidegger, 1998a: 314).

notion of Being as event (*Ereignis*), in which Being always “stays away” or conceals itself in the process of bringing beings (entities) to presence gives us an understanding of Being which can never itself be reduced to presence.⁶

Vattimo’s anti-foundational interpretation of Heidegger’s conception of Being is influenced in important ways by Hans-Georg Gadamer’s hermeneutics⁷. Heidegger and Gadamer are generally recognised as the two principal theorists of hermeneutic ontology. Vattimo characterises hermeneutic ontology broadly as the thesis that there is an important relationship between Being and language, and suggests that the difference between Heidegger and Gadamer rests on which term they prioritise: while for Heidegger Being is of primary significance, Gadamer focuses on language. Vattimo interprets Gadamer’s well-known phrase “Being that can be understood is language” (Gadamer, 1989: 475) as an identification of Being with language, but insists that this interpretation must be historicized. That is, Being is coextensive with the *shifting* interpretations of the present and the past that take place in and through language. Influenced by this reading of Gadamer, Vattimo argues that the understanding of Being which Heidegger’s work has made available is one in which the historical transmission of messages constitutes the interpretive horizons of our world⁸. He writes that:

[a]ll we can say about Being at this point is that it consists in trans-mission, in forwarding or destiny: *Ueber-lieferung* and *Ge-schick*. The world plays itself out in horizons constructed by a series of echoes, linguistic responses, and messages coming from the past and from others (others along side us as well as other cultures) [...]. Being never really *is* but sends itself, is on the way, it trans-mits itself (Vattimo, 1984: 157).

On Vattimo’s interpretation of Heidegger, then, Being cannot in principle be made present, or be thought as a stable foundation, since it consists in the historical transmission of linguistic messages which form the horizon, background or context of our interpretation(s) of the world. The web of such messages has to recede into the background in order to make what shows up in the foreground intelligible, and this background is always changing as new messages are integrated into it, while others pass away and are forgotten.

⁶ Vattimo develops this reading of Heidegger most fully in his paper “*An-Denken*. Thinking and the foundation” in Vattimo, 1993.

⁷ This influence is unsurprising; Vattimo studied with Gadamer, and translated his *Truth and Method* (Gadamer, 1989) into Italian.

⁸ For a concise statement of Vattimo’s reading of Gadamer, see Vattimo, 2002.

Vattimo is concerned to present this anti-foundational interpretation of Being as the actual ontology of the contemporary world. Since, for Vattimo, the Being of the *Lebenswelt* (lifeworld) is coextensive with interpretation, Being itself has “declined” or “weakened” as the foundational pretensions of ontology have been undermined from within. Vattimo thus agrees with the “orthodox” reading of Heidegger as seeing the history of Western philosophy and culture⁹ as the oblivion of Being through the development of metaphysics, but argues that the current state of ontology, in which there is very little of Being (in the sense of stable ground or foundation) left, should be affirmed as the solution to metaphysics (understood as foundational thought). Vattimo thus asserts the value of a “weak,” anti-foundational conception of Being, and a “weak thought” which aligns itself with the ontology of the current situation.

As a corollary to his “left”, anti-foundational interpretation of Heidegger, however, Vattimo rejects the possibility that metaphysics may be definitively overcome. He argues that such an overcoming necessarily implies a new foundation. Since this in turn implies a thinking of Being on the model of presence, it simply imposes a metaphysics of a new and different form. Vattimo therefore resists positing the anti-foundational interpretation of Being as a new beginning which leaves metaphysics outside and behind. Rather, he writes that “[f]or Heidegger, as for Nietzsche, thought has no other ‘object’ (if we may even still use this term) than the errancy of metaphysics, recollected in an attitude which is neither a critical overcoming nor an acceptance that recovers and prolongs it” (Vattimo, 1988: 173).

Vattimo appropriates Heidegger’s concept of *An-Denken* to explain the kind of “recollection” alluded to here. For Vattimo, *An-Denken* indicates a kind of post-metaphysical thinking which is able to approach the anti-foundational understanding of Being. Vattimo explains:

What is the characteristic feature of thinking as *An-Denken*? This thinking that lets go of Being as foundation and manages to think *Anwesen*

⁹ While Vattimo often focuses his analyses on philosophical texts, he points to other cultural factors as contributing to this ontology of decline. Indeed, one of the most interesting aspects of Vattimo’s work is the way he traces relationships between the philosophical developments of thinkers such as Nietzsche and Heidegger and developments in culture. Vattimo relates the ontology of decline to the end of colonialism and the rise of mass media in the “Introduction” to *The End of Modernity* (Vattimo, 1988). More recently (and perhaps more contentiously), he has related this ontology to the advent and development of Christianity (Vattimo, 1999).

[presence] as *Anwesenlassen* [letting-be-present], manages to move toward thinking Being *properly* – why should it be *Andenken*? Because memory is the way of thinking *Schickung*, the transmission or sending of Being as *sending* (Vattimo, 1993: 120-1).

The term *An-Denken* implies a remembering, recollection, or “rememoration” of the traditions passed on through history which form the horizons of our world. With *An-Denken*, Being is not thought metaphysically as something which might be grasped as present – rather, it recognises that Being can only be remembered, that is, considered as something which is always already gone, or passed away. *An-Denken* thus corresponds to the thinking of a Being which gives, but which is never itself given *in* the giving. Vattimo writes that “*Schickung* [transmission] lets itself be thought only as always already having happened, as a gift from which the giving has always already withdrawn” (Vattimo, 1993: 121).

For Vattimo, the interpretive horizons which constitute the *Lebenswelt*, the world as it is given to us, are “interference patterns” produced by a multitude of heterogenous messages echoing down to us from the past. These messages cannot be retrieved or made present in the sense of being made fully explicable and grounded, since the worlds in which they once found their grounding have passed away. “For instance,” Vattimo writes, “Plato’s works cannot be rethought today in terms of whether the doctrine of Ideas is true or untrue, but only in terms of trying to recollect the *Lichtung* [clearing] or preliminary *geschicklich* [opening] within which something like the doctrine of Ideas is able to appear” (Vattimo, 1988: 175). This inability to grasp as present the ideas and traditions which nevertheless form the horizons of the lifeworld is well expressed, Vattimo suggests, in the “festivals of memory” evoked by Nietzsche in aphorism 223 of *Human, All-Too-Human*:

The best in us has perhaps been inherited from the feelings of former times, feelings which today can hardly be approached on direct paths; the sun has already set, but our life’s sky glows and shines with it still, although we no longer see it (Nietzsche, 1984: 137).

Crucially, for Vattimo, since Being is understood as the historical transmission of such messages, and the history of Being is the history of metaphysics, then the current configuration of Being remains conditioned by the metaphysical thought of the past (albeit in a weakened form). However, *An-Denken* does not simply recollect metaphysical ideas in their metaphysical form – i.e. with their claims to universal truth. Vattimo notes

Heidegger's claim in *The Principle of Reason* (Heidegger, 1991) that "to think from the point of view of the *Ge-Schick* [destiny] of Being means to entrust oneself to the liberating bond of the *Überlieferung* [tradition]" (Vattimo, 1988: 175). As Vattimo cashes this out, the recollection of tradition is liberating in the sense that it frees us from the foundational nature of metaphysical thought: *An-Denken* "ungrounds" metaphysical theses precisely because their historically relative character becomes foregrounded. Moreover, this conception of thought as *An-denken* is synonymous with the reconsideration of past ideas in the history of philosophy for their significance in the current situation: insofar as this situation is constituted by a weak ontology, past ideas retain currency only through renouncing their foundational claims, and rise to significance to the extent that they contribute to thinking life in an anti-foundational manner.

Vattimo extends the notion of post-metaphysical thought as *An-Denken* by equating it with the further Heideggerian notion of *Verwindung*. This term suggests an alternative to overcoming (*Überwindung*), an alternative Heidegger himself suggests in a number of places¹⁰. Vattimo notes the difficulty of translating this term, and indicates that it has a number of meanings which must all be taken into account in order to understand Heidegger's intent. *Verwindung* may mean distortion, twisting, convalescence, or resignation. On Vattimo's interpretation, when Heidegger suggests the possibility of a *Verwindung* of metaphysics, he is alluding to a kind of resignation to metaphysics which paradoxically allows a twisting-free from it. Vattimo gives substance to this difficult notion by suggesting that the *Verwindung* of metaphysics should be understood as a resignation to the impossibility of thinking in categories which are absolutely outside or beyond metaphysics, simultaneously accompanied by the refusal to interpret these categories as objective truths which conform to permanent structures of the world. In this way, the *most* metaphysical aspect of metaphysical thought – its reference to Being as ground or foundation – is subverted from within¹¹.

Vattimo thus argues for a particular interpretation of the image of post-metaphysical thought which emerges from Heidegger's work as one which involves the necessity of thinking in metaphysical categories, but in such a

¹⁰ Most importantly for Vattimo, in the first essay of Heidegger's *Identity and Difference* (Heidegger, 1974). Heidegger also uses the term in the context of a discussion of nihilism in "On the question of Being" (Heidegger, 1998a).

¹¹ Vattimo's most thorough analysis of the term *Verwindung*, on which I have drawn here, is in Vattimo, 1988: 172-3.

way that they are ungrounded through *An-Denken* (recollection) and *Verwindung* (distortion). Such a thought rejects the idea of thinking *new* ideas as theories which might more accurately represent the supposedly stable structures of reality: to think Being, it seems, we must recollect the *history* of thought (and this is precisely what Heidegger does in his studies in the history of philosophy, which, Vattimo argues, should be understood not as preparatory to post-metaphysical thought, but as themselves exemplifying post-metaphysical thinking). At the end of the essay “Dialectics, difference, and weak thought,” however, Vattimo suggests a way in which post-metaphysical thought may yet think the new. Here he writes that this possibility comes into play:

insofar as *Ge-schick* does not merely hand down *Wirkungen* [effects], but also specific traces, elements that have not actually become the world: the ruins accumulated by history at the feet of Klee’s angel (Vattimo, 1984: 163).

The reference here is of course to Walter Benjamin’s “Theses on the philosophy of history” (Benjamin, 1999). Vattimo’s suggestion is that of all the messages handed down through history, some are more influential than others in constituting the horizons of the present. There are always messages, however – books, texts, local traditions, and so on – which have been preserved but have not had, or no longer have, an effect on the world. Such messages are the ruins of the movement of history, where all that has not contributed to progress lies as waste. Thinking the new in a weakened, post-metaphysical manner, Vattimo suggests, means rummaging in the ruins of history which – in Benjamin’s image – fall at the feet of Klee’s *Angelus Novus*. In the next and final section, I shall attempt to pick up and dust off some shards of Sartre’s thought which seem to have accumulated at the Angel’s feet.

The An-Denken of existentialism: *Sartre and the aesthetics of living*

If we follow the thread of Vattimo’s interpretation of Heidegger, we find ourselves in a position to reconsider Sartre’s thought. This interpretation does not help us to assess the correctness or incorrectness of Sartre’s interpretation and appropriation of Heidegger on specific points of detail. Nor does it allow a point-by-point refutation of the issues on which Heidegger criticises Sartre in the “Letter on humanism”. What it arguably does allow, however, is a transposition or “twisting” of the framework within which Sartre’s relation to Heidegger, and the contemporary

relevance of the former's thought, might be considered. If we follow Vattimo's argument that post-metaphysical thought is only possible as an *An-Denken* and a *Verwindung* of metaphysics, then arguably we need not dismiss Sartre's analysis of human reality, consciousness, and lived experience out of hand, on the grounds that he has not fully broken with metaphysics. Rather, while accepting that Sartre does not break with metaphysics as radically as Heidegger may wish, we might recognise that he nevertheless goes a long way in applying what is for Vattimo most distinctive about Heidegger's gestures towards post-metaphysical thought – that is, an ungroundedness, or anti-foundationalism – to human reality. In the essay “*An-Denken: thinking and the foundation*,” Vattimo makes the following suggestion regarding the nature of the self that appears as a corollary to the anti-foundational conception of Being that he finds in Heidegger:

[...] liberation from the exclusive bond to its historical context puts Dasein itself in a state of suspension; a suspension which touches him in his deepest constitution as subject (and it is in this sense that I believe Heidegger's antisubjectivism is to be read).

What then can be said for the continuity that constitutes subjective life (even on a psychological level), when the latter turns out to be marked in its very structure by the discontinuity of the *Ab-grund* [abyss]? Are we not in the very same situation described by Nietzsche in *The Gay Science*, when he speaks in aphorism 54 about “the consciousness that I am dreaming and that I must go on dreaming”? Nietzsche's work clearly shows that all this has vast implications for the mode of thinking the I as individuality/identity (Vattimo, 1993: 128).

I wish to argue that these implications, which Vattimo finds in Nietzsche and Heidegger, are precisely what Sartre draws out in productive ways through his existentialist theory of consciousness. Moreover, for Sartre, the ungrounded character of human existence which devolves from this theory of consciousness means that “living” becomes something we must approach in an aesthetic manner. Vattimo's reading of Heidegger thus allows a rethinking of Sartre's work which situates it as contributing to a Heideggerian aesthetics of living; one that is relevant to the current situation. In this final section, I will outline this interpretation by first glossing Sartre's analysis of consciousness in *The Transcendence of the Ego* (Sartre, 2004) and *Being and Nothingness* (Sartre, 1956), then recalling his remarks on the link between choosing values and aesthetic judgement in *Being and Nothingness* and “Existentialism is a humanism” (Sartre, 1975).

Sartre begins to develop an “ungrounded” theory of consciousness and the self in his early engagements with Husserlian phenomenology. In so doing, he moves decisively away from the Cartesian tradition in which the *cogito* is posited as a secure foundation for knowledge. In *The Transcendence of the Ego*, he argues against Husserl’s thesis that the ego is a transcendental condition for consciousness, accompanying, and necessary for, all conscious experience. Sartre contends that positing such a transcendental ego is superfluous within the terms of Husserl’s own phenomenology. He notes that it is often thought necessary to posit this ego in order to account for the *unity* of consciousness and the *individuation* of separate consciousnesses, but argues that these two features of consciousness can already be accounted for adequately by the phenomenological theory of intentionality. This theory posits that all consciousness is consciousness *of* something. On Sartre’s interpretation, this means that consciousness always transcends, or moves beyond, itself towards objects exterior to itself. In so doing, Sartre argues, consciousness is unified by the object(s) that it posits. Moreover, in positing objects it limits itself, constituting a “synthetic totality” which isolates itself from other totalities of the same type (i.e. other consciousnesses) (Sartre, 2004: 6-7). Sartre concludes:

the phenomenological conception of consciousness renders the unifying and individualizing role of the *I* totally useless. It is, on the contrary, consciousness that renders the unity and personality of my *I* possible. The transcendental *I* thus has no *raison d’être* (Sartre, 2004: 7).

Sartre further argues that the ego is a “transcendent, external” object of consciousness, a synthetic unity of states, actions, and qualities¹². It is an object posited by certain conscious acts, but not a permanent accompaniment of all consciousness. The ego arises when consciousness reflects on its past states, acts, and qualities, and synthesises these elements into a unity. For Sartre, consciousness is an impersonal “transcendental field” which acts spontaneously, and consciousness is the condition for the possibility of the ego, rather than vice versa. The rejection of the transcendental ego means that the spontaneous activity of consciousness has no foundation and is not conditioned or limited by a

¹² Briefly, these terms have the following meaning for Sartre. States are inert, passive modes of consciousness, such as emotions. Actions encompass both physical actions and psychical actions (such as doubting, reasoning, or meditating). Qualities are potentialities for particular states or actions, such as “failings, virtues, tastes, talents, tendencies, instincts, etc.” (Sartre, 2004: 28).

stable structure. Without the transcendental ego, consciousness “determines itself to exist at every instant, without us being able to conceive of anything *before* it. Thus every instant of our conscious lives reveals to us a creation *ex nihilo*” (Sartre, 2004: 46).

This analysis of consciousness in *The Transcendence of the Ego*, I suggest, undermines the common view – which is arguably something of a caricature – of Sartre as a traditional, Cartesian subjectivist. Arguably, it is such a view – based on certain (perhaps unfortunate) passages in the later, popular lecture “Existentialism is a humanism”¹³ – which dominates the orthodox Heideggerian view of Sartre as a metaphysician¹⁴. The view of consciousness which Sartre develops in *The Transcendence of the Ego*, and which continues to inform *Being and Nothingness* and other existentialist writings, is radically destabilised, cast adrift from any secure, Cartesian point of reference. In *Being and Nothingness* Sartre emphasises the *transcendent* character of consciousness established in *The Transcendence of the Ego*: consciousness surges up spontaneously at each moment, necessarily transcending or going beyond itself. This view of consciousness undermines the identity and stability of the self, and underlies Sartre’s paradoxical assertion that consciousness “must necessarily be what it is not and not be what it is” (Sartre, 1956: 120). Insofar as consciousness transcends itself and is not bound to a fixed identity by an underlying ego, but rather nihilates its past, it is not what it is. Insofar as consciousness projects itself beyond itself towards futural possibilities, it is what it is not.

In *Being and Nothingness* as well as “Existentialism is a humanism”, Sartre continues to insist that consciousness must be the ground of philosophy, since it is our primary point of access to the world. However, given the analysis to which he subjects it, it appears as a ground which is itself without a stable foundation. Insofar as consciousness constantly and

¹³ For example, in this lecture Sartre states: “Our point of departure is, indeed, the subjectivity of the individual, and that for strictly philosophic reasons. It is not because we are bourgeois, but because we seek to base our teaching on the truth, and not upon a collection of fine theories, full of hope but lacking real foundations. And at the point of departure there cannot be any other truth than this, *I think, therefore I am*, which is the absolute truth of consciousness as it attains to itself...outside of the Cartesian *cogito*, all objects are no more than probable, and any doctrine of probabilities which is not attached to a truth will crumble into nothing” (Sartre, 1960: 360-1).

¹⁴ Tilottama Rajan supports this view, arguing that “when Heidegger ‘corrects’ Sartre, he reduces the latter’s work metonymically to *Existentialism is a Humanism...*” (Rajan, 2002: 56).

necessarily transcends itself, it is incapable of forming a stable structure or enduring presence. As such, Sartre's model of consciousness conforms with the image of subjective life that Vattimo finds in Heidegger, where it is marked in its very structure by the discontinuity of the *Ab-grund*. Indeed, the view of the Cartesian *cogito* that Sartre develops characterises it as a "groundless ground" in the sense that it is a necessary starting point of any philosophy, but it cannot form a stable foundation on which to construct an edifice of knowledge as Descartes wished. Sartre writes: "In truth the *cogito* must be our point of departure, but we can say of it, parodying a famous saying, that it leads us only on condition that we get out of it" (Sartre, 1956: 120). "Getting out" of the *cogito* is precisely what Sartre's existentialist theory of consciousness does by "deconstructing" the ego through the self-transcendence of consciousness, leaving us with an image of the self which is contingent upon the groundless ground of the transcendental field, or of consciousness as transcendent¹⁵.

From this interpretation of conscious experience as ungrounded, Sartre draws the implication that living becomes something we must understand and carry out on an aesthetic model. For Sartre there is neither a human nature nor a God to ground our choices concerning the forms of life or modes of existence we adopt. Instead, as is well known, Sartre believes that we have a radical freedom regarding the choice of values by which we live. This radical freedom is directly related to Sartre's rejection of a perduring ego and his view of consciousness as self-transcendent, for on such a view of the self, we have no stable "inner character" which might direct the values we live by. Such values are instead radically contingent, and must be *invented*. Sartre explains:

[T]o say that we invent values means no more nor less than this; that there is no sense in life *a priori*. Life is nothing until it is lived; but it is yours to make sense of, and the value of it is nothing else but the sense that you choose (Sartre, 1975: 367-8).

So how does one choose values? It is here that the *aesthetic* character of living becomes evident. Drawing a parallel between the artist who paints a canvas and the choice of moral values, Sartre writes:

As everyone knows, there are no aesthetic values *a priori*, but there are values which will appear in due course in the coherence of the picture, in the relation between the will to create and the finished work [...]. We are

¹⁵ In *Being and Nothingness* the notion of consciousness as a transcendental field is abandoned, but the spontaneous, transcendent nature of consciousness that it supports is maintained and extended.

in the same creative situation [...]. There is this in common between art and morality, that in both we have to do with creation and invention. We cannot decide *a priori* what it is that should be done (Sartre, 1975: 364).

Sartrean existentialism thus construes the process of choosing values on an *aesthetic* model, insofar as such values arise through a process of creation rather than existing prior to this process. Moreover, Sartre understands this choice of values as a matter of concrete action in and on the world: choosing values is no abstract affair, but takes place through the project of *living*. As such, Sartre develops what may justifiably be termed an "aesthetics of living". On Sartre's account of consciousness, there are no "interior depths" of the mind or soul which might be expressed *through* action, and choosing values is not a matter of introspection which precedes action. Insofar as the ego is construed as a contingent object of consciousness, the self is "out there", in the world, with things. The self cannot act as an invariable structure for valuations which may consistently be applied in varying situations, since the ego is not thought to be present in every situation. For Sartre, then, choosing values is a process coextensive with creative actions: we do not determine our values *a priori* and then apply them to the world, but rather, living is conceived as a creative process whereby values become manifest through our concrete engagement with the world. Sartre expresses this point through one of the most memorable images in *Being and Nothingness*:

[...] in this world where I engage myself, my acts cause values to spring up like partridges (Sartre, 1956: 76).

In conclusion, the argument I have briefly sketched here is that Sartre applies the anti-foundational principles that Vattimo gleans from his reading of Heidegger to human life, to lived experience, in ways which make the practice of living a characteristically aesthetic one. Insofar as Sartre presents an "ungrounded" interpretation of human subjectivity, on Vattimo's ontology of the current situation his work takes on a healthy complexion of living significance. It is true that the "ungrounding" in Sartre proceeds in a very different direction to the ungrounding Vattimo finds in Heidegger: ungrounding through the evanescence of consciousness as a transcendental field or transcendent upsurge, rather than through the contingency of history and language. In this respect, comparisons between Heidegger and Sartre do not extend very far. Moreover, it is likely that neither Heidegger nor Vattimo would approve of the use to which I have put their thought here. Nevertheless, if we ask what conceptions of ourselves, of our conscious experience, and of our

lives are made available by the “weak” conception of Being as the historical transmission of messages, then, I suggest, with Sartre we go some way towards finding an answer. What we may find of value in Sartre, I have argued, is a Heideggerian (in the sense of “anti-foundational”) notion of lived experience which still speaks to us today. It is in this direction, I suggest, that we may give flesh to Carravetta’s suggestion that Vattimo’s weak thought gives us the freedom to “reopen the dossier of existentialism”, and which indicates one possible link between the thought of Martin Heidegger and the aesthetics of living.

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MARTIN HEIDEGGER AND THE *ALETHEIA* OF HIS GREEKS

VRASIDAS KARALIS

I) Back to the Origins

No one can deny the fact that Martin Heidegger's approach to the Greeks is at the same time erroneous and ingenious. Historically, his interpretation is that of a schoolboy who, impressed by what he reads, can't get his facts right. Philosophically however, he stretches the semantic calibration of the texts he is talking about into an unimaginable perspective by expanding their exegetical potential to its utmost limits. In that liminal position, the Greek text itself develops unexpected synaptic connections which relocate the semantic centre of its structure. Heidegger re-structured Greek texts in such a way that new meanings emerged and new perspectives were born out of structures hitherto exhausted by centuries of commentaries and endless ambitious attempts to "reconstruct" their "original" meaning.

It is obvious that whichever the Greek text he is dealing with, Heidegger has serious problems with its context. He cannot see any relevance to the fact that Greek thinking emerged as a form of talking about spaces of common experience and interaction. Indeed the *political* nature of Greek philosophy even in its most moral, metaphysical or even logical expression is passed over in silence in all his commentaries on them. The fact that Greek thought became self-reflective, when criticism of ideas and opinions became a public institution and addressed issues of shared values, remained also an untouchable mystery for Heidegger. Moreover, the fact that around the end of the sixth century thinking started addressing issues of its own self-articulation remained something of an odd and irrelevant observation for him throughout his life. Finally the fact that these specific philosophers lived, thought and died in their own societies and within their own semantic universe seems also to have remained something of an arcane mystery for him: the connection between philosophy and the philosopher remains equally untouched and discarded. In a way, according to him, the texts themselves were written by language

as a transcultural and trans-temporal entity, bridging centuries, societies and thinkers beyond the specificity and singularity of each particular life. The rhetorical oscillation between the “Greeks” and the specific philosopher he was talking about is another interesting ambivalence of his approach: Heidegger talks about the Greeks as if the individual philosopher was an instant within a supra-personal continuum. The fact that Anaxagoras was exiled for impiety and Socrates executed for “novel daemons” had no impact on their thinking, according to Heidegger, or more precisely, their ideas had nothing to do with their destiny.

Yet, overall his approach to the Greeks was that of a typical German philosopher who had read Hegel’s *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* and had become somehow irritated by the “naturalistic” re-interpretation of the main philosophical trends by Edward Zeller. Heidegger’s approach is intensely focused on the conscious attempt to de-historicize the philosophical text as a product of its society and the work of a specific individual. He dives into the “deep structure” of the text in an attempt to experience and bring out the very essence of the form of thinking that made it possible. However, a modern reader of Jaeger’s *Aristotle* (1934) learns a considerable amount of information not simply about the philosopher’s life but also about his philosophical problematic and his specific way of philosophising. The prudent interweaving of personal details (in their absolute majority, of course, conjectures or imaginative reconstructions) with philosophical discussions about the validity of his arguments or the significance of his deductions give both to the unspecialised reader and the overspecialised philosopher something to think about and reach a conclusion relevant to their own degrees of understanding or expectations from the text.

When we read Heidegger’s lectures on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* we have the impression that he *partialises* the text by inscribing into it his own problematic and semantic references beyond the horizon of Aristotle. “Admittedly,” he writes, “Aristotle did not *in our context* [our italics] explicitly unfold the question of a full knowledge of essence. Although he did, in fact, bring the delimitation of the essence of actuality into the closest discerning connection with the determination of what a capability is. But for reasons which lie locked in the ancient and Western conception of being and thereby of what-being, neither is the central problem for the question of essence posed later” (Heidegger, 1995: 192). The suspicious reader immediately understands that Aristotle’s text is used, in Heidegger’s *context*, as the testing ground for a hypothesis which is not emerging from its own structure without the mediation of another mind and of a different way of thinking. The text is not explored or even

interrogated from within its own presuppositions and schemata of conceptualization: on the contrary it is asked questions that it is unable to answer. Indeed it is re-inscribed within a problematic which may have existed in its semantic potential in a subordinate or even symptomatic manner but now through Heidegger's intervention it is relocated and becomes the dominant axis of signification within the existing text. We are under the impression that Heidegger's framing of Aristotle's meaning of *essence* (which obviously ignored the philological problems about the writing of his *Metaphysics* as we have it today) does not really reveal the real tension in the semantic potential of the notion as investigated by Aristotle himself. If so, it would have been obvious that the concept of essence in Aristotle was an ambiguous innovation in relation to Plato or the Pre-Socratics; ambiguous in the sense that it contained semantically both Plato's and Parmenides' understanding of it but with an added layer of new reflection, belonging to his era and its own performative use of language. Aristotle's notion of *ousia* goes beyond the physicality of the notion as seen in Plato for example; it was indeed the first attempt to create logical schemata for the conceptualization of something prior or posterior to experience. For Aristotle, *essence* is a pre-physical notion and as such a post-linguistic event; indeed, from the point of contemporary socio-cultural thinking one could argue that it was not even a "psychical" notion but that it represented a "bridge-concept" linking the empirical with the notional and thus establishing an epistemological discourse of self-reflection about the act of thinking and the philosophical activity as such.

Heidegger is searching for something else in Aristotle's text which is not going to be found there. According to Heidegger the absence itself becomes the ultimate postulate for the philosopher's task. He wants to point out the "concealment" of being and its problematic which it seemed to him must have started sometime then in Western philosophical thinking. Yet Aristotle leaves the concepts of *ousia* and *dynamis* in a pregnant ambiguity – an ambiguity that made his text so crucial in forming, informing and reforming a wide variety of conceptual frameworks throughout the centuries. On the contrary, Heidegger seems determined to univocalise the text, to extract or impose a form of semantic unity which the text itself does not possess, if only for its multilayered synthesis. He interrogates the text by positing questions which didn't exist in its semantic horizons. When Aristotle posited the question of essence, he was talking about the intellectual enterprise to find the *synaptic connectivity* that underpins the polymorphous diversity of objects, relations and meanings. Heidegger problematises the text for what is *not* included in its formal and conceptual configuration, of what has been excluded or

implied, as a sub-text – an approach in itself creative and challenging, in accordance with Aristotle's most elegant statement: *ἡ γὰρ νοῦ ἐνέργεια ζωή* (the creative activity of thought is life, *Metaphysics*, Λ, 1072: 26).

In this sense, he doesn't receive the wrong answer from the text and his own approach cannot be judged on the basis of historical verifiability; on the contrary he manages to graft the text with a new layer of significations that relocate its hermeneutical potential. *His approach is an act of creative expansion of the Aristotelian thought in its notional singularity.* Even when Heidegger asks questions about Being, or the real being, a term which for Aristotle had completely different connotations, a new horizon of significations emerges from within the Aristotelian thinking forms. Thinking is an act of translating experience and transferring conceptual abstractions onto the level of cultural discourse: it internalises a way of thinking and then externalises it through the practices or the needs of the prevailing discourse. Essentially Heidegger's approach makes Aristotle's thinking a conceptualising model for today's philosophical enterprise, by acclimatising his thinking forms into the discursive potentialities of contemporary philosophical discourse.

Indeed the creative elaboration of Aristotle's metaphysics can hardly be underestimated. Ancient Greek, Christian and Arab commentators saw Aristotle's texts as ultimate codes of reference to be endorsed, elucidated or rejected. Heidegger chose a different approach: he tried to salvage the philosophical "essence" of Aristotle by extending the limits of its language and bringing them to their final consequences. This was not an attempt to "modernise" Aristotle but from a modern problematic to analyse the semantic conditions of his philosophical statements and then elaborate on the morphoplastic potential of his language. In this respect Heidegger (and we might stress here: despite the limitations of his own thinking) succeeded in extricating Aristotle's thought from its canonical position as a holy relic and made it again contentious and antagonistic to the dominant way of philosophising in the first half of the twentieth century – a philosophical thinking dominated by naturalistic progressivism or biological determinism. *"How concepts antagonise culture"* is probably the best way of describing Heidegger's re-configuration of Aristotle's and indeed of ancient Greek's thinking as a whole.

Aristotle is not the only case of such interrogation for the emerging signification. Heidegger's most famous endeavour must be the Pre-Socratics and his attempt to retrieve through them the Being-discourse from its later concealments. In that respect it will be interesting to see his approach to them in juxtaposition to that of Karl Popper in order to appreciate the different perception and understanding of what thinking is

about in both cases. In his seminal essay “Back to the Pre-Socratics”, Popper, after an extensive analysis of the various discussions between the Pre-Socratic philosophers, pointed out that they established a method of thinking which was incorporated into modern science; he terms this method as “the theory that knowledge proceeds by way of conjectures and refutations” (Popper, 1972: 152) and by “criticizing theories” establishing “rational knowledge” and forming thus the scientific critical way of thinking. Popper himself refers to a certain *loss* after the Pre-Socratics, strangely reminiscent of Heidegger’s concealment of being: “To my knowledge,” he suggests, “the critical or rationalist tradition was invented only once. It was lost after two or three centuries, perhaps owing to the rise of the Aristotelian doctrine of *episteme*, of certain and demonstrable knowledge (a development of the Eleatic and Heraclitean distinction between certain truth and mere guesswork). It was rediscovered and consciously revived in the Renaissance, especially by Galileo Galilei” (Popper, 1972: 151). The essay, written in 1958, looks like an intellectual rebuttal of Heidegger’s appropriation of the Pre-Socratics on the very same grounds that Heidegger perceived a loss and a concealment of an important element of the philosophical activity before Socrates. Popper stated that “[...] the critical attitude of the Pre-Socratics foreshadowed, and prepared for, the ethical rationalism of Socrates: his belief that the search for truth through critical discussion was a way of life – the best he knew” (Popper, 1972: 153).

Unquestionably Heidegger had a completely different notion in his mind when he indicated a certain loss in philosophical thinking that he observed after the Pre-Socratics. The concealment he observed was something beyond the idea of epistemic rationalization we witness after Aristotle. It was almost beyond the limits of the contemporary philosophical language; it referred to a much more fundamental form of thinking. Heidegger understood that our relation with Greek philosophical thinking was determined by erroneous translations through philologists’ titanic attempts to reconstruct the “original” and “authentic” meaning. Knowing that translation will always be incomplete and erroneous, he attempted to translate *conditions of signification* and not crystallized notions created by convention and normalised by custom or academic canonisation. With the Pre-Socratics in particular, Heidegger makes issues of approach and interpretation aspects of the process for the translating not of the content of words but of the signifying processes that made them possible. So he moved to a completely different direction the task of interpreting the Greeks by relocating the centre of semantic articulation. The text itself became the locus in which both its history and future

converged: each philosophical term (and Heidegger mainly focuses on words or brief statements) is to be understood as a process leading to its invention and as a point of departure from its meaning. Heidegger extends the limits of its meaning by a subtle transference of its semantic field towards different relations. The philosophical statement, word or verse, are not limited by their historical context: indeed Heidegger's translations de-limit language from its conditionality and bring to the fore the endless variability of meaning. This has to be seen as both positive and misleading. The paradox of his approach is probably the most interesting and ambivalent element of his whole understanding of the *aletheia* of his Greeks.

II) The Problem of Translation *Aletheia*

Heidegger's question of *aletheia* is primarily a problem of semantics. Like *logos* in Greek, *aletheia* is a word of polyvalence and multiordinality: in different contexts, it encapsulates a variety of meanings according to the validity of the statement or the values of the speaker. In Parmenides the concept appears twofold: as the noun for "truth", "reality" and as the personification of the quest for truth. The Pythagorean Philolaus equated the notion with the absolute notion of the number whereas according to Democritus it could not be found because it was hidden "en bytho", in the deep. Anaxagoras employed the neuter *to alethes* indicating that "the weakness [of the senses] means that we are incapable of discerning the truth" (Waterfield, 2000: 130). Careful study of such sentences can easily confirm that the notion of *aletheia* indicated four different processes: first, the process of experiencing something while it is happening; second, the process of establishing a relation between guess and event; third, the process of trying to conceptualise the "real" as an internal reality; and fourth, the confirmation of hypothesis by means of referring to an extralingual event.

It is true that the Pre-Socratics gave particular importance to the first two processes, whereas Plato and Aristotle to the last two. But for both Plato and Aristotle the language of philosophy was much more complex and self-referential while the structure of their sentences had a different organisation, reflecting a different order of experiencing. *Aletheia* had already developed a self-validating history of a variety of meanings which were denoted every time the term was employed. Hence the different order of abstraction in the notion of truth that we see in Aristotle or the last dialogues of Plato. Parmenides however is a very interesting case in regard to his way of understanding *aletheia*. In reference to him, Felix M. Cleve

coined the pejorative term “glossomorphic” to indicate “the possibility of talking without thinking” (Cleve, 1969: 538); and he added: “The Parmenidean *einai*, then, has a verbal stem that has lost its original meaning” (Cleve, 1969: 542). Ignoring the negative characterisation, the term can be apt to describe the transitional nature of Parmenides’ language, especially of the way he understood the most crucial terms of his philosophy *einai* and *aletheia*, and the connection between them as terms of logical thinking.

Martin Jaeger pointed out that while *aletheia* was given its “pregnant and almost philosophical sense” by Hesiod, Parmenides “carried it on to a new stage of meaning” (Jaeger, 1947: 94). Parmenides’ glossomorphism can be seen in his famous assertion that “[t]hinking and being are one and the same” (Jaeger’s translation). Jaeger insists that “in announcing this identity he is simply attacking the conceivability and knowableness of the Non-existent. [...] Parmenides can have no doubts about the existence of an object, inasmuch as *noein* itself is never really *noein* except when it knows the actual. What the understanding or *logos* contributes is the all-important consideration that the Existent cannot be as our senses reveal it to us – namely something manifold and in motion” (Jaeger, 1947: 103). Indeed this is the crux in Heidegger’s understanding and translation of *aletheia*. He understood the fluidity of the notion in the way that the Pre-Socratics used it. The fluidity itself expressed a new order of abstract conceptualisation, to be completed only with Aristotle, almost two centuries later. When Heidegger tried to transpose the concept within the contemporary way of understanding the truth, he had to re-trace its semantic evolution. Indeed, if Parmenides’ *aletheia* has two meanings, Heidegger’s has only one. It reverted to an “originary” meaning from which supposedly it came from. In that sense Heidegger attempts a reversal of signification. By doing so, he suggests a new understanding of *aletheia* as un-veiling, unconcealment. He states: “In so far as being as such is, it places itself into and stands in *unconcealment, aletheia*”; and adds: “We thoughtlessly translate, and this means at the same time misinterpret, this word as ‘truth’. To be sure, one is now gradually beginning to translate the Greek *aletheia* literally. But this is not much use if immediately afterward one again understands ‘truth’ in an entirely different, un-Greek sense and reads the other sense into the Greek word” (Heidegger, 2000: 107). He stresses that this meaning of *aletheia* as unconcealment, “was lost due to ‘logic’” (Heidegger, 2000: 127); and that the appropriation of *aletheia* by Western *Dasein* has led to the transformation of “the original essence of truth, *aletheia (unconcealment)*, [...] into correctness” (Heidegger, 2000: 203).

Whoever reads ancient Greek philosophy knows that *aletheia* also means, amongst other things, correctness, exactness and verification. In his famous lectures of 1942-43 on Parmenides Heidegger suggests that the radical transformation of the essential meaning of *aletheia* for the West took place with the Romanisation of Greece which led to its understanding as *veritas* or *rectitudo*. One could suggest that what we witness in the Latin translation of the term is indeed a localisation, by omitting the overloaded connotations around the Greek term. That was a common approach to the philosophical language of the Greeks in its appropriation by Latin authors. The fact that there was something *asymmetric* between Greek and Latin has been announced poignantly in Lucretius' famous verses: "*Nec me animi fallit Graiorum obscura reperta / difficile illustrate Latinis versibus esse, / multa novis verbis praesertim cum sit agendum / propter egestatem linguae et rerum novitatem*" (*De Rerum Natura*, 1: 139-139)¹. The idea that Latin was poor in words to fit the "*strangeness of the things*" may account for the process of *translatio* in the widest sense of the word that we see during the Hellenistic and Late Antique period; it was a translation both of *imperium* and of culture which led to the gradual emergence, collapse and re-emergence of the West. In his lectures on Parmenides, Heidegger struggled to indicate the magnitude of such asymmetry and the problems it caused for the question of Being in the West. "What is decisive", he observes, "is that the Latinization occurs as a *transformation of the essence of truth and Being* within the essence of the Greco-Roman domain of history. This transformation is distinctive in that it remains concealed but nevertheless determines everything in advance. This transformation of the essence of truth and Being is a genuine event of history. The imperial as the mode of Being of a historical humanity is nevertheless not the basis of the essential transformation of *aletheia* into *veritas*, as *rectitudo*, but is its consequence, as this consequence it is in turn a possible cause and occasion for the development of the true in the sense of the correct" (Heidegger, 1992: 42). Yet, later in his life he would qualify the statement by indicating that *aletheia* indeed "was originally only experienced as *orthotes*, as the correctness of representations and statements" (Heidegger, 1972: 71).

We could explicate further on this, but indeed one can claim that Heidegger understood that translation meant a conscious omission of contextual localisation and an attempt to elucidate the invariant structure of the text which was beyond the level of its verbal articulation in its

¹ "I know how hard it is in Latin verse/ To tell the dark discoveries of the Greeks,/ Chiefly because our pauper-speech must find / Strange terms to fit the strangeness of the thing" (trans. W.E. Leonard).

original language. His own translations of the fragments by Parmenides and Heraclitus try to bring to the surface the pre-lingual structure of the experience determining the expression and as such configure in his philosophical idiom the ground against which such statements could be possible today. Without being a linguistic relativist, he refutes the idea put forward by the famous Bible scholar Eugene A. Nida that “[a]nything that can be said in one language can be said in another” (Nida, 1969: 4). Different things are said by different languages in the sense that different aspects of experience are stressed by each language; indeed languages complement each other through their singular taxonomies since they call into being different forms of life and experience extralingual in themselves. Heidegger understood that since there are not enough words to talk about the multiplicity of mental images, we tend to overload traditional words with surplus meaning. In his approach to Parmenides he embarked on finding the substrate significating processes that transcend the limitations of grammar. His approach was that “*what can be said in one language can be only understood through another*”. Maybe this refers to the privileged position of both Greek and German as languages of inherited philosophical potential; yet one can easily understand that for him what was lost in the translating process could only be retrieved in a pre-linguistic level expressed by the “is-ness” of the verb to be. “It must be that what is there for speaking and thinking of *is*; for [it] is there to be, / whereas nothing is not...” (Gallop, 1984: 61). In the un-grammaticality of the first sentence in the existing fragment 6, we can attribute Heidegger’s immense creative effort to recapture the amazement of Parmenides in front of the presencing of Being and the confusion of his language in the process of articulating the elusiveness of such experience. Parmenides associated *aletheia* with the absence of predication in the existence of being; and Heidegger tried to retrieve that process as he embarked on the titanic project of constructing, in his own context, a new vocabulary for the ontological grounding of unconcealment. Probably it is still early to tell how successful he really was.

III) From a Historical Perspective

It is obvious that Heidegger’s Greeks have been a contentious issue in the study of his work. Not simply because Heidegger had a philosophy of his own which he projected onto a diverse tradition of philosophical propositions. The problem with his approach to the Greeks, similar to the problem of most German philosophers after Hegel, refers mainly to his own creative re-interpretation of their work and posits the question of the

limits of such a creative approach to the thinkers or indeed to all philosophical traditions of the past.

The main point of the present exploration is that such an approach is a cultural or even a political question which can be understood both symptomatically and circumstantially. Despite his implied belief that he belonged to an extra-temporal almost ahistorical philosophical continuum, Heidegger was the product of his age and indeed a figure refracting its resistances and fears. Philosophically, his approach to the Greeks has to be also understood as an engagement with certain texts from a specific hermeneutical position at a very critical point of the history of Europe. From within that position, we have argued, Heidegger understood that the "Greeks" needed a new translation of the structure of their thought and not of the reference of their statements. Such translation re-wrote the Greek philosophical legacy and re-created its semantic potential. There were limits of course, both historical and exegetical. Heidegger for example thought that Greek philosophy ended with Aristotle, which is grossly unfair to the great thinkers of Stoicism and Epicureanism, even to Plotinus, a thinker whose style of philosophising is strikingly close to his. But beyond such strange "concealment", the obvious question remains to be answered: can we interpret a philosophical text of the past in a "valid" manner, meaning by understanding its values as they were defined by their own horizon of significations, if we maintain the privileged position of knowing what followed the specific text and its reception throughout the centuries?

Despite their privileged position, the fate of the Greeks has been quite unfortunate in the history of philosophy. Since their re-discovery after the Renaissance and more specifically after the German Hellenism of late 18th and 19th centuries, Greek philosophical legacy has been attributed crucial importance for the contemporary development of all philosophical questions about the mind, morality, politics, knowledge, ontology and epistemology. Historically, Heidegger's ideas about the Greeks express the profound anxiety of many European thinkers before the fragmenting languages of modernity and their need for canonical authorities which articulated problems through the intense dialogue within the confines of a communitarian understanding of thought. It is the presumed self-sufficiency and self-totalisation that gives to the philosophy of the Greeks a sense of generative principles that defined and circumscribed areas of thinking about their historicity. Furthermore, circumstantially the philosophies of the Greeks express something which is not specifically Greek; they express a social order that represented semantic co-relations that could be historically situated and conceptually understood. But from a

philosophical perspective the importance of the Greeks as a generic term meant a completely different understanding of the cognitive process, of the place of knowledge in the exploration of conscious existence, of the process that Socrates would call “the examined life”.

Ever since Plato instituted in his *Cratylus* the murky business of etymologising as part of the philosophical endeavour, philosophical inquiry has suffered immensely from the seduction of linguistic inventiveness. The Sophists, Plato himself, Christian philosophers, and some of the most important modern philosophers easily succumbed to the allure of written signs without the necessary guide of a language theory or the assistance of implied assumptions about the function of linguistic statements. Contemporary analytic philosophers, as in antiquity grammarians and logicians, struggled hard to dissect the performative functions of various linguistic articulations, implicitly transforming forms of understanding into questions of logic; Wittgenstein himself struggled endlessly to form a grammar of philosophical statements in order to clarify, elucidate and crystallise meaning of specific statements in context. But he ended with a functionalist, almost behaviouristic interpretation of linguistic statements that is neither philosophical nor indeed an interpretation. Yet his statement, “[g]rammar tells what kind of object anything is” (Wittgenstein 2000: 116), may be the right guide in the understanding of the objects in Heidegger’s thought.

Heidegger was one of the ambitious philosophers of the 20th century – and his ambition was greatly assisted by the German language – leaving aside the strong criticisms of his obscure neologisms. The educational organisation and the deep reverence for antiquity gave him the opportunity to embark on the promethean task of re-inventing the language of philosophy and re-writing its history. We must see his project for the historical un-concealment of Being as intricately connected to his own philosophical idiom and from this perspective, interpret and explain his overall perception of those early philosophers who he, persistently and indiscriminately, calls “the Greeks”.

As we know there has been a lot of criticism against Heidegger about his perception of “the Greeks”. Some of this is justified and some totally inappropriate. Heidegger does not talk about “the Greeks” as such; he talks about the Greek landscapes in Holderlin’s poetry, or in the neoclassical tapestries of Germany; and this is not necessarily bad since “the Greeks” are essentially an abstraction, the hypostatisation of states of mind, practices or patterns of behaviour. Rejecting this would mean that with the strange force of empathic union and weberian “*verstehen*” we are able indeed to reconstruct and re-live the mental world of the Ancients

from within our own mental structure and philosophical conditioning. This would not only be impossible but even undesirable. Plato is not Plato's Plato after Aristotle; and Plato-after-Aristotle is not the same as Plato Christianus, or Plato Neoplatonicus, or Plato Hegelianus and so forth.

Heidegger approaches the Greeks from the vantage point of having studied their legacy and the tradition of philosophising they established in Europe. His perception of them finds in their name a beginning, the origin and the source of a specific way of thinking – and irrespective of what that specific way of thinking entails, it is still the beginning of our way of thinking. Heidegger and indeed German philosophy since romanticism was obsessed with the question of origins, therefore with the problem of time. As it is well-known, the secularisation of temporality after the French Enlightenment led to the disappearance of a providential god or of an implied eschatology and replaced it with the idea of an endlessly open and continuously incomplete progress. This had as a consequence the strong sense of existing-in-time, of temporality and temporal conscience, in order to situate the thinking subject within such infinity which abolished all sense of a situated self. Religious temporality placed individuals within a plan of gradual unfolding; the individual could locate his or her space and could articulate his or her subjectivity by employing the symbolic network of associations established by religious myths and more specifically Christian metaphors. Post-Enlightenment thinking privileged time because it was afraid of space: the very locus of existence became a moment of negation and annulment, feeling was strongly internalised by the emotive language of romanticism. In that process which was rendered more shaky Charles Darwin's blind contingency of humanity, or Sigmund Freud's destructive introspective conscience, time and temporality emerged as interpretive principles to account for the disappearance of space.

Heidegger continued the romantic tradition about the Greeks, despite being fully aware of its limitations. He continues it in a rather complex and highly controversial manner, starting with his early approaches to Plato and then through to the gradual discovery of the Pre-Socratics. We know of course that when Heidegger talked about the Greeks he meant Parmenides, Heraclitus, Plato and Aristotle. Diogenes Laertius, the first historian of philosophy, believed that all Greek philosophy culminated with the work of Epicurus. The Pre-Socratics, Plato and Aristotle were the stepping stones towards the completion of philosophy in his work. For Heidegger however, the Greeks were the names and the words defined by Hegel: "*En*" is the word of Parmenides; "*logos*" is the word of Heraclitus"; "*idea*" is the word of Plato; "*energeia*" is the word of

Aristotle. All these words define the horizon of the word “being” in Greek and the way that the Greek word for “being”, that is *einai*, is in its essence *aletheia*; for Heidegger *aletheia* can not be found in the Latin “*veritas*”. According to him, *aletheia* is not accuracy or truthfulness or even fidelity. *Aletheia*, he translates, is “*esse*”, being in its originary, primordial, essence. It partakes with all words mentioned above; *en*, *logos*, *idea* and *energeia* but it is the foundational structure (being) of all of them. It exists within them and within the totality of the Greek language since Greek is the language of philosophy and thus its *aletheia* must or simply points towards *ousia*. Now the question arises if *aletheia* is *ousia*; how are disclosed-ness and presence-ness linked? Is *aletheia* the negation of *Dasein*, of the historical being in its “thrownness” in society? It is interesting to remember here that when in the 60s Heidegger visited Greece, he talked about the “increasing desolation of the modern *Dasein*” (Heidegger, 2005: 44) as if the *aletheia* of “us today” is concealed and subsumed under modernity and “the chains of calculatory planning” (Heidegger, 2005: 44).

Unquestionably Heidegger has located a very serious philosophical problem; how language, unconceals the concealed essence of being. What then is the relation between language and mental energy? In one of his last seminars in 1969, he reverted to Parmenides and stated that “*aletheia* was visible to the Greeks in the form of το αὐτό of νοεῖν and εἶναι as expressed in the poem of Parmenides” (Heidegger, 2003: 39). Certainly this is one of the most controversial ideas of Greek philosophy. Parmenides states that “*to gar auto noein esti te kai einai*”: “For the same thing both can be thought and can be” (Waterfield, 2000: 58); “For it is the same thing that can be thought and that can be”; (Burnet, 1958: 173).

The sentence can be interpreted in many different ways since its syntax is extremely ambiguous. The equation of being and thinking resulted in a rather strong association of being with *logos* and then, in the Greek context, *logos* with power and social authority especially with the Sophists. Furthermore Heidegger linked *aletheia* with the act of revealing in a physical sense. In the same text he stressed that “for the Greeks ἀλήθεια is visible as λόγος and λόγος means, much more originally than to ‘speak’: to let presencing” (Heidegger, 2003: 39). This is a very important statement but it refers again only to a limited number of philosophers. Paradoxically it bears the ring of the Sophist’s extolment of language as public performance and *parrhesia*. *Logos* from the Greek *lego* means, as Heidegger perceptively observed, to gather around, to collect. So is made language the locus of convergence and confluence of the potential diversity of the phenomena. So if we associate *logos* with *aletheia*, *noein*

and *einai*, then the act of unconcealing becomes an act of public appearance and expression in the very Greek sense of the word. Heidegger adds to this another dimension from Parmenides' most prominent opponent. Heraclitus has articulated one of the most enigmatic statements of all time: *ἡ φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ*. Heidegger translates this as "[r]ising (out of self-concealing) bestows favor upon self-concealing" (Heidegger, 1975: 114). The translation is both inaccurate and original. In his commentary Heidegger states that *Φύσις* points to *aletheia* itself. So even in this Heraclitian pronouncement we can detect that "the thoroughly positive sense of "forgetfulness" still completely shines through. It becomes visible that being is not "subject to falling-out-of attention", but rather conceals itself to the extent that it is manifest" (Heidegger, 2003: 46). So *φύσις* is associated with unconcealment, the revelation of the latent being-ness. In fact this is quite simple, almost simplistic as a statement; the Greeks, especially the Pre-Socratics like Xenophanes or Anaxagoras, had a more sophisticated perception about the exploration of the latent being-ness through *dokos* (opinion) and *fantasia* (imagination) – as indeed Parmenides himself, and later Plato in his cave parable. Despite the fact that Heidegger grew up during the idealistic humanism of classicists like Jaeger, or Bruno Snell, he seems to ignore the painful struggle of Greek thinkers to establish and institute the primacy of abstract thinking. In some strange way, he does not even mention at all the intense intellectual struggle of early Greek thinkers to see the unity of being within and probably despite the plurality of beings. His main question is encapsulated in the statement: "all our considerations take off from a fundamental distinction which can be expressed thusly: being is not a being. This is the *ontological difference*" (Heidegger, 2003: 48).

Philosophically it seems that Heidegger looks at the Pre-Socratics from within a Platonic or even a Christian paradigm. Historically, most Pre-Socratics tried to establish links between language (culture), which was called *thesis*, with *physis*, namely nature; some of them tried to reduce the plurality of experience into certain invariant principles which guaranteed unity, regularity and predictability. Others simply considered experience from the point of logical articulation, such as the Eleatics, and especially Parmenides and Zeno. But Parmenides established an "epistemological quest" in order to account for both "unity and singularity" by denying the "plurality of things" (Waterfield, 2000: 54 & 55). Socrates and Plato however started deductively and from the point of logically verifiable statements as definitions; an approach which caused serious problems when it had to deal with liminal cases, exceptions, marginal positions and generally speaking interstitial forms. Aristotle tried later to solve the

problem by creating a compromising synthesis that would account for the singular and the plural from the point of the potential, establishing a completely different form of ontological diversity.

This dynamic exploration of experience and language by the Greeks seems to have passed unnoticed by Heidegger. From his works, it is self-evident that Heidegger saw the Greeks in an un-historical and de-historicizing manner; so he missed the dynamic element of their struggle with their own language to establish signifying schemata for thought-processes, possibly because of his struggle with German tradition. Heidegger's Greeks are presented as derealisations of the historical, probably in the way that Freud explained the "disturbance" of his own memory on the Acropolis, as "a sense of guilt [...] attached to the satisfaction in having gone such a long way: there was something about it that was wrong, that from the earliest times had been forbidden. It was something to do with a child's criticism of his father, with the undervaluation which took the place of the overvaluation of earlier childhood" (Freud, 1984: 456).

Heidegger aspired for philosophy to become a sacred science again and not a professional occupation. Philosophy asks and sometimes answers the fundamental question: "Why are there beings at all instead of nothing?" Whatever subject asks such a question "must transpose itself – and with it the history of the West – from the center of their future happening into the originary realm of the powers of Being" (Heidegger, 2000: 41). When such a transposition takes place, the philosopher, and his people must return to the origin of the quest, before modernity and its established history: "the same hopeless frenzy of unchained technology and of the rootless organisation of the average man" (Heidegger, 2000: 40). Heidegger's Greeks were the emblems of a lost unity that manifested itself through their understanding of Being as the "spiritual destiny of the West". Yet when he visited Greece, the philosopher who, during the 30s, extolled the land and the soil as principles of self-determination, found himself in the same Freudian position of experiencing a disturbance of memory or perception. On the island of Delos, he "saw the emergence of pure being", an epiphany and hierophany of the missing *aletheia*. "Αλήθεια", he exclaimed, "is the proper word of the Greek Dasein" (Heidegger, 2005: 33). On Crete he asked himself "what is this that shines in things and hides itself in their shine?" (Heidegger, 2005: 23). It seems that he found in the landscape what the people who lived in it could not give him. And in that respect it is psychologically and therefore philosophically interesting to point out that Heidegger in his encounter with the Greek landscape articulated his very uneasy relationship with

modern history. He perceived a landscape without humans, filled with moving shadows in opposition to the “invisible nearness of the divine” (Heidegger, 2005: 43).

From the “pathmarks” of the Black Forest to the luminous emptiness of Greek islands, Heidegger searched for the internal “shine” of the landscape as the imminent transfiguration of the real. In his statement: “Delos itself is that field of the unconcealed hiddenness that accords sojourn...” (Heidegger, 2005: 34) sounds dramatically similar to the famous beginning of the Gospel of John: “*He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him*” (John 1: 10). In John one can also find the association of *aletheia* with action: “But who does what is true (*ho de poion ten aletheian*) comes to light, so that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been done in God” (John, 3: 21); or even in the most Hebraic fashion: “Your word is truth” (ο λόγος ο σος αλήθειά εστιν) (John 17: 17), *aletheia* is associated with the word said, with language. This substratum of *aletheia* as sanctification, indeed the transfigurability of the real through the intensity of its presencing is something that culminates in Jesus’ words: “I am the way, the truth and the life” (John 14: 6) which associates truth with the verb “I am”, creating an immense lacuna in understanding of the conceptual framework indicated by such identification. No wonder that afterwards Pilate asked Jesus “what is truth?” (John, 18: 38). In Greek philosophical language *aletheia* is out there in the very objecthood of the real; in the New Testament, and especially in John’s theological language, *aletheia* is embodiment: it is the epiphanic revelation of the fullness of life through the *sarx* of the human nature.

Indeed in Heidegger’s understanding of *aletheia*, there exists the inherent tension of Greek and Hebrew conceptions of truth, as knowledge and revelation respectively. As Jerome Murphy-O’Connor has pointed out: “For the Semite the truth of a statement is an extension of the truth of his maker. For a Greek the reference is primarily to the truth of the object about which the statement is made” (Murphy-O’Connor, 1968: 182). Indeed, whether the actual-thing-at-hand reveals something about its creator or about its very essence, is probably the question at the heart of Heidegger’s *Dasein*. For the Greeks however the actuality of things had nothing to do with the intentionality of a creator. *Aletheia* indicated the “intense visibility of beings”, the ability of their presence to be intensely experienced by the gaze of humans in a responsive relation. *Aletheia* was not *veritas*, truth or *Wahrheit*; for these notions it seems more appropriate to use the Greek neuter το αληθές employed mainly to indicate the “truth of a statement”. Especially for the Pre-Socratics, and to a certain extend

for Socrates and Plato, *aletheia* was temporalised cognition, the ability to establish formal analogies between what is understood and how it is understood. *Aletheia* meant *responsivity* between the seer and the seen, a relation of mutual interpenetration: the knowing subject changes its forms of understanding as the known object is resignified. The knower is transformed by what is known: this is the Greek understanding of *aletheia*. In the Greek understanding of the word there is nothing to be un-veiled or to be revealed; the presence of everything is the epiphany of truth. In philosophical terms, *aletheia* can only be found in predication, in the qualities of beings, not in the ineffability of their pre-formal existence (or Being-ness). Indeed one could suggest that for the Greeks, *aletheia* was the relation established between beings *through* their predicates. The Greek verb to be (*Eimi*) means “exist as” and not “exist”; it presupposes formal, or formless, presence, therefore predication and actuality. Existence as such, the being-ness, comes into Greek much later, during the semantic osmosis of Greek and Hebrew cultures in Alexandria; when in the Septuagint, the Hebrew God’s answer to Moses is translated as “I am the being-ness”, (in itself a peculiar syntactical form: “*Ego eimai ho on*”, Exodus, 3: 14), then the notion of existence as existing without predication emerged. (Although the masculine grammatical form is full of cultural connotations also, something which indicates that there cannot be a language of being without predication: beings become linguistic events only in their qualities and connections.)

Heidegger imposed a completely different hermeneutical perspective when he dealt with the philosophers and the poets he chose to engage with. He relocated the idea of such epiphanic knowledge into a theological content so his text brings within it the semantic tensions of its origins. The tension itself culminates Heidegger’s project to offer new translating conditions for Greek texts in a way that both infuriated and inspired many thinkers after him. For example his translation of the Heraclitian saying “*ethos anthropo daimon*” as “Man, insofar as he is a man, dwells in the nearness of god” (Heidegger, 1998: 269); or “the (familiar) abode for humans is the open region for the presencing of god (the unfamiliar one)” (Heidegger, 1998: 271) is rather evocative of medieval mysticism (more specifically of Meister Eckhart or the poet Angelus Silesius) than of the vision of moral character being the unique fate of the individual.

If there could be a conclusion from the previous notes, it is that Heidegger never saw the Greeks antagonistically, as if he was struggling to establish his philosophy through an *agon* against them. On the contrary through his Greeks, Heidegger antagonised the history of his era and somehow used them as an incentive and as a weapon to fight against his

time and yet to enrich its intellectual endeavor. Probably this paradox of his Greeks can be explained by reference to his own intellectual adventure through his century. Indeed, the philosopher, who never talked about himself, can be implicitly seen in his works as he was struggling to come to terms with the history of his time and his own position in it. Probably the semantic dichotomy of his own *aletheia* can be felt in his own paradoxical involvement with historical processes that were beyond his philosophical reflections and could be interpreted, precisely because of their origins, only with the discourse of politics. The fact that Heidegger ignored that “philosophy was born in and through the *polis* and is a part of the same movement which brought about the first democracies” (Castoriadis, 1991: 15) accounts for his own very limiting understanding of *aletheia*. Probably only within the institutions of political democracy can *aletheia* have the un-veiling impact that Heidegger suggested. Otherwise it cannot be invested with the psychical energy that will make it a vital project for transformation. The incompleteness in Heidegger’s confrontation with the Greek notion of *aletheia* can be attributed to his personal inability to confront history. In his own way, he made Greek thinking relevant again but muted its disruptive truth. By decontextualising the forms of meaning that *aletheia* generates, he domesticated the concept which in any tradition “contains the possibility of a historically *effective universality* only by effecting a rupture with the world of traditional or authoritarian instituted representations” (Castoriadis, 1991: 74). By depriving *aletheia* of its most “enowing” element, by erasing the seer from the seen, Heidegger simply deleted the first letter from the word and threw the concept back to its pre-philosophical opacity and ineffability.

Indeed, if we may appeal to one of the most playful peculiarities of Greek grammar, the alpha-privative may also be the alpha-cumulative, meaning all oblivions together. Heidegger made the Greeks speak philosophically again by transferring their linguistic representations onto a contemporary level of significating networks. Yet, he imposed a thick glass barrier between us and them so much so that everything they were saying became inaudible and mythical regressing to its pre-logical origins. *Aletheia* cannot exist without *logos*; as Parmenides would have said “for that is not / cannot be spoken or thought”; and despite its ingenious and imaginative interpretive translations Heidegger’s discussion of *logos* is missing the point of his own innovative approach; because if, as he explained: “Ο λόγος, το Λέγειν is the laying that gathers. [...] Ο Λόγος then would be the Greek name for speaking, saying, and language...” (Heidegger, 1975: 77) then it remained to be explained *what* is gathered

and *what* is said. But that was not attempted and Heidegger's own creative misappropriation of the Greeks left behind an unfulfilled great promise.

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INDEX OF NAMES

(From the Index Martin Heidegger's name is omitted since it appears many times in most pages of this volume)

- Abe Masao, xv
Adams, Paul 28
Adorno, Theodore, 119, 124, 158, 163, 164
Agamben, Giorgio, 20, 21, 25, 26, 28, 29, 32, 43, 44, 82, 86, 87, 88, 89, 91, 92
Aiken, H., 164
Alter Robert, 8, 9
Anaxagoras, 213, 221
Anaximander, xi, 6, 79
Angehr, Emil, 15, 21
Aristotle, 58, 68, 76, 102, 166, 170, 176, 179, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 216, 219, 220, 227
Arnschuld, Ulrich, 207
Ashton, E.B., 164
Attell, Kevin, 26

Bachelard, Gaston, 28, 29
Barash, Jeffery A., 16
Barbiero, Daniel, 193, 205
Bambach, Charles, 30
Barnes, Kenneth, 34
Barrett, W., 164
Barth Karl, ix
Beardsworth, Richard, 186, 188
Beaufret, Jean, 191
Benjamin, Walter, 2, 126, 166, 176, 199, 205
Benso, Silvia, 96, 106, 108
Berdoulay, Vincent, 37
Bernstein, J. M., 160, 162, 164, 167
Betz, Maurice 13, 21
Bischoff, Ulrich, 53, 58
Blamires, Cyprian, 207

Blanchot, Maurice, 82, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 137
Blochman, Elisabeth, 16, 17
Bloom, Harold, 118
Boad, C.D., 113, 124
Breazaele, Daniel, 56
Brecht, Bertolt, 4
Brogan, Walter A., 170
Bruns, Gerald, L., 84, 89, 93
Buchheim, Iris, 18
Budderbeg, Else, 19
Burnet, John, 220, 226
Bush, George, 5
Buttimer, Anne, 27

Caputo, John D., 96, 99, 102, 108, 109
Capuzzi, Frank, 205
Carnal, Rudolf, 3
Carravetta, Peter, 189, 205
Carrol, John, 71
Castoriadis, Cornelius, 225, 226
Cavell, Stanley, 126, 128, 129, 130, 131
Chamberlain, Houston, 26, 29, 32, 33, 44
Chillida, Eduardo, 40
Clauss, Ludwig, 35, 38, 42, 44
Cleve Felix M., 213, 214
Collins, George, 188
Critchley, Simon, 127, 129, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 141

Damasio, Antonio, 113, 124
Darwin, Charles, 14, 219
Davari, Ardakani Reza, 75

- De la Blanche, Paul Vidal, 25, 26,
27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 36, 37, 38,
41, 43,
Deleuze, Gilles, 37, 172
Derrida, Jacques, 102, 108, 109,
114, 125, 178, 182, 190, 191,
206
Descartes, René, 58, 201, 202, 203
Dickie, George, 55
Dickinson, Robert, 36
Dilthey, Wilhelm, 50
D' Isanto, Luca, 207
Dostoyevsky, Feodor, 53, 58
Dogen, xv
Driesch, Hand, 25

Eckhart, Meister, 224
Einstein, Albert, xi
Elden Stuart, 28
Emad, Parvis, 34
Emerson, Ralph Waldo, 130
Engel, Manfred, 19
Entrikin, Nicholas J., 37, 42

Foucault, Michel, 6, 28, 37, 190,
206
Fox, Nick Farrel, 190, 205
Franchi, Stefano, 207
Freud, Sigmund, 172, 219, 222
Furstenau, Marc, 127, 128, 129,
130, 134, 138, 141

Gadamer, Hans-Georg, 6, 193, 195,
205, 207
Galileo, Galilei, 40
Gallop, David, 216, 226
Gasché, Rodolphe, 96, 109
George Stephan, 79, 82, 83, 84
Gottlieb, Anthony 79
Gray, Glenn J., 205
Gregory, Wanda Torres, 177
Griffiths, Paul J., 112, 113, 125
Guattari, Félix, 37
Gumbrecht, Hans Ulrich, 19

Haar, Michel, 15, 191

Habermas, Jurgen, 7, 75, 76
Hamburger, Käte, 13
Hammett, Dashiell, 128
Haushofer, Karl, 37
Haynes, Kenneth, 11, 12
Harrington, Anne, 25, 26, 28, 29,
32, 43, 44
Harrison, Thomas, 206, 207
Heidegger, Martin, vii, viii, ix, x, xi,
xii, xiv,
Hellingrath, Norbert von, 8, 20
Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich,
xii, 1, 10, 216, 219
Heraclitus, 79, 219, 221
Hesiod, 214
Hitler, Adolf, 10, 16, 18, 25, 73,
Hofstadter, Albert, 28, 164
Hodge, Joanna, 96, 102, 110
Hoelscher, Steven, 28
Hölderlin, Friedrich, 8, 9, 10, 12,
13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20,
21, 31, 43, 51, 71, 72, 74, 75,
79, 80, 83, 103, 118, 129, 218
Howells, Christina, 190, 206
Humboldt, van Wilhelm, 80, 81,
Hussein, Saddam, 73
Husserl, Edmund, 3, 50, 157, 158,
201
Hyland, D.A., viii

Jaeger, Martin, 209, 214, 221
John (Evangelist), 223
Jones, James, 135
Joyce, James, 119
Jünger, Ernst xiv, 131

Kant, Immanuel, xi, 1, 2, 3, 58, 73,
102, 157, 158, 159, 160, 162
Kertscher, Jens, 207
Kettering, E., 99, 111
Kitaro, Nishida, xv
Kirkergaard, Sören, 53, 58
Kjellen, Rudolf, 37
Kokoschka, Oscar, 53
Krell, David Farrell, 34, 49, 50, 52,
57, 58, 59, 164, 205

- Kreuzer, Joachim, 10, 19
 Kurosawa, Akira, 127, 128
- Lacoue-Labarthe, Phillipe, 166
 Laertius, Diogenes, 219
 Le Corbusier, 165
 Leibniz, Gotfried Wilhelm, 102
 Lefebvre, Henri, 37
 Leonard, W.E., 215
 Leopardi, Giacomo, 85
 LeWitt, Sol, 165
 Lewis, Michael, 96, 110
 Levinas, Emmanuel, 40
 Lily, Reginald, 188
 Lohner, E., 164
 Lovvitt, William, 58, 188
 Lucretius, 215
- MacEvoy, Leslie, 127, 128, 129,
 130, 134, 138, 141
 Macquarie, John, 164
 Maly, Kenneth, 34
 Malick, Terence, 126, 127, 128,
 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134,
 135, 136, 137, 139, 140, 141
 Malpas, Jeff, 207
 Manousakis, J.P., viii
 Margolis, Joseph, viii
 Marion, Jean-Luc, 153, 156
 Marx, Karl, 2, 3, 4, 5
 Marton, Andrew, 135
 Mason, Eudo C., 12
 Massey, Doreen, 42
 McNeill, William, 206
 McGill, Allan, 79
 Melville, Herman, 88
 Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, 28, 29,
 114, 125
 Miller, Linn, 39
 Mugerauer, Robert, 27
 Munch, Edvard, 45, 53, 57
 Murphy O' Connor, Jerome, 223
- Nagarjuna, xv
 Negri, Antonio, 90
 Neilson, Brett, 90, 91
- Neske G., 99, 111
 Newton, Isaac, 40
 Nicalacopoulos, Toulas, 143, 156
 Nida, Eugene, A., 216
 Niemeyer, Max, 4
 Nietzsche, Friedrich, 1, 2, 14, 15,
 17, 21, 56, 58, 70, 71, 118, 123,
 125, 174, 193, 197
 Nishitani, Keiji, xv
 Nowlis, Vincent, 113
- Olafson, Frederich, 95, 96, 111
- Paddock, Troy, 29, 30, 31, 41
 Parmenides, xi, 10, 12, 13, 21, 78,
 88, 210, 213, 214, 215, 216,
 219, 220, 221, 225,
 Emad, Parvis, 142, 149
 Phillips, James, 16, 31, 43
 Philolaus, 213
 Plato, xi, 1, 2, 41, 68, 76, 157, 159,
 160, 183, 197, 210, 213, 218,
 219, 221
 Plotinus, x, 216
 Pöggeler, Otto, 49
 Popper, Karl, x, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 75,
 211, 212
 Pythagoras, xi
- Radl, Emmanuel, 25
 Rajan, Tilottama, 190, 202, 206
 Ratzel, Friedrich, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29,
 31, 32, 36, 37, 38, 41, 43
 Read, Peter, 39
 Rée, Jonathan, 49, 50
 Relph, Edward, 27, 42
 Richardson, William, 146, 156
 Rilke, Rainer Maria, 8, 9, 10, 11,
 12, 13, 14, 17, 19, 20, 21, 53,
 79, 83, 88, 103, 129,
 Rilke, Clara, 12
 Risser, James, viii, 16
 Roberts, David, 49, 58, 77
 Robinson, E., 164
 Rockmore, Tom, viii, 190, 191, 206
 Rosenblum, Robert, 53

- Roux, Wilhelm, 25
- Sadler, Ted, 170
- Safransky, Rudolf, x, 79,
- Sartre, Jean Paul, 190, 192, 193,
199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204,
206
- Schapiro Meyer, 54
- Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm,
Joseph, 10
- Schiller, Claire, H., 35
- Schopenhauer, Arthur 14
- Schulz, Nick, 73
- Seamon, David 27
- Shakespeare, William, 128
- Shawcross, William, 73
- Sheehan, Thomas, 145, 156, 171
- Silesius, Angelus, 224
- Silverman, Kaja, 127, 130, 131,
132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137,
138, 139, 141
- Smeyers, Paul, 57
- Snell, Bruno, 221
- Snyder, John P., 206
- Socrates, 209
- Sorush, Abdolkarim, 75
- Spielberg, Stephen, 139
- Stalin, Joseph, 73
- Stambaugh, Joan, 205
- Steiner, George, x
- Stephens, Anthony, 11, 13
- Stevens, Wallace, 113, 120, 121,
122, 123, 124, 125, 138
- Stiegler, Bernard, 166, 178, 181,
183, 185, 186, 188
- Stoedner, Helmut, 12
- Till, Karen E., 28
- Thiele, Leslie Paul, 96, 111
- Thomä, Dieter 15, 16, 18
- Thomas Aquinas, xi, 58
- Thoreau, Henry David, 130,
- Trakl, Georg, 79, 83
- Tronti, Mario, 90
- Tuan, Yi-Fu, 27, 41, 42
- Uexküll, Jakob von, 25, 26, 27, 28,
29, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 39,
42, 43, 44
- Ungaretti, Giuseppe, 83
- Urmson, J.O., 49, 50
- Vadén, Tere 106
- Van Gogh, Vincent, 54, 60, 159
- Vassilakopoulos, George, 143
- Vattimo, Gianni, x, 85, 86, 92, 189,
190, 193, 195, 195, 196, 197,
198, 199, 200, 203, 206, 207
- Vico, Giambattista, 117, 118, 125
- Wagner, Richard, 14
- Ward, J. F., 71
- Waterfield, Robin, 213, 220, 221
- Webb, David, 207
- Whitehead, A.N., ix
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig, 2, 3, 193,
218
- Wolin, Richard, 15, 16
- Wrathall, M.A., viii
- Wright, Kathleen, 18
- Xenophanes, 221
- Young, Julian, 11, 12, 34, 59, 128,
141, 165, 173
- Zeller, Edward, 209
- Zeno, 221
- Ziarek, Krysstof, 103, 104, 111